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SERMONS

ON THE

Following SUBJECTS.

VIZ.

God no reſpecter of perſons.

The ſcripture doctrine of juſtification explained.

Moral reflections on the hiſtory of *Joſeph*.

Of the natural relation of men to God, and their common tie to each other.

Of Murder, and the vices and cuſtoms leading to it.

Of Duels, and Self-murder.

On the example and moral character of Chriſt.

The nature of a heavenly converſation explained.

On incredulity, and the morality of Faith.

The different characters of true Religion, and Enthuſiaſm.

Of theft, fraud, and extortion.

The doctrine of a particular Providence conſidered.

Of the unity of God, and the *Jewiſh* theocracy.

On the ſeventh commandment.

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By JAMES FOSTER.

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BRITANNICUM

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SERMON I.

God no reſpecter of perſons.

ROM. ii. 11.

For there is no reſpect of perſons with God.

THE true knowledge of God is the neceſſary foundation of religion, and the ſtrongeſt *guard* and *enforcement* of moral virtue. It muſt therefore be a moſt important queſtion,--- what we mean by the true knowledge of God? And the anſwer to it, in the main, is plain and obvious, and muſt be ſtated thus:—that we aſcribe all perfections to him,

SERM. I. him, and think worthily and honourably of his works and government. — But this *alone* is not ſufficient: For we may all agree in acknowledging the *general attributes* and *characters* of the Deity, and ſtill entertain very falſe and reproachful notions of him, for want of having a juſt ſenſe of what is included in *each* of theſe general characters, and explaining them in a *right* manner. If, for example, we frame ſuch an idea of his goodneſs and juſtice as is conſiſtent with *tyranny* and *oppreſſion*, or reconcile his being no reſpecter of perſons, with *real partiality* and *arbitrary* proceeding, we uſe good *words* it muſt be allowed; but our *ſentiments* are corrupted and dangerous. And what uſeful end can it anſwer, to ſpeak of the maker and ſupreme governour of the world, in *decent* aud *reſpectful* terms, if for want of knowing what is *implyed*, in the propoſitions we aſſent to, and tracing them through their *natural conſequences*, we maintain *other* principles that are directly repugnant to them? To what purpoſe is it, to have learnt a language that we do not rightly underſtand, to believe the infinite Being to be

be both *merciful* and *cruel*, *wiſe* and *capri-* SERM.
cious, *equitable* and *partial*; and, in ſhort, I.
to fancy that *contradictions* are true, which, in reality, deſtroy each other? Such inadequate conceptions, and *incoherencies* of thought, to muſt pervert the *ſenſe*, and in a great degree fruſtrate the *influence*, of the beſt of principles.

AND the *miſchiefs* reſulting from it, with reſpect to that ſacred and immutable part of the divine character, which I deſign to conſider in the following diſcourſe, are notorious and undeniable. For as on the one hand, either through ignorance of the *intent* and *uſe* of particular operations of providence, or of what is implyed in this certain dictate of the light of nature, 'that 'God is no reſpecter of perſons,' many frivolous and weak objections have been ſtarted not only againſt *revelation*, but againſt a *providence*, and conſequently againſt *religion in general:* So, on the other, *chriſtians* themſelves have too often ſet raſh and impertinent *cavillers* at work, by extorting ſtrange doctrines from *metaphors* and *peculiar idioms* of ſpeech, the meaning of which they were altogether unacquainted

SERM. I. with; by extending what is applied by the writers of the New Teſtament, only to ſome *ſpecial* caſes, to *other* caſes of a quite *different* kind; and, in a word, by not adhering to *plain general principles*, like that mentioned in the text, as the only ſure *ground* and *ſtandard* of their opinions and reaſonings — with which obſcure and dubious paſſages muſt always be made to *correſpond*. I therefore proceed,

FIRST, To explain the propoſition itſelf, (that there is no reſpect of perſons with God.)

SECONDLY, I ſhall ſhew, what *concluſions* and *inferences* may fairly be deduced from it. And,

IN the THIRD place, point out the *religious* and *moral* uſes, to which ſuch reflexions and inquiries as theſe are naturally adapted.

THE FIRST thing is, to explain the propoſition laid down by St. *Paul*, "that "there is no reſpect of perſons with God."

And

And in order to the explication of this ſubject, and to remove the moſt material difficulties by which the injudicious or the artful, may cloud and perplex it, it will be proper for us to conſider, that God may be juſtly repreſented in *two* different views, as the original *proprietor* and lord of nature, and as the *moral* governour and judge of the world: Or, which amounts to the ſame, either as *wiſely* and *freely* diſtributing his *gifts*, to which his creatures could not poſſibly have an antecedent claim; or as *judicially* diſpenſing rewards and puniſhments. — Let us then, in the firſt place, conſider God as the ſupreme and ſovereign diſpoſer of all things, *voluntarily* diſtributing *gifts* to his creatures; in which light he muſt be abſolutely *independent*, and *accountable* to none. And this will enable us to account for innumerable *caſes*, which the ignorance, diſcontent, and cavilling temper of mankind have render'd *confus'd* and *intricate*, and preſumptuouſly taxed with *partiality*. For under *this* head will be comprehended moſt of the *preſent* circumſtances of human life, and all thoſe *varieties* and ſeeming *inequalities*, in the

SERM. I.

SERM. I. condition of man, which we are ſo apt to complain of. The *gifts* of God are of a vaſt extent, but not ſubject to the *ſame rules* as his *judicial acts:* And this *diſtinction* muſt always be remember'd, and applied to every particular caſe that we are inquiring into; otherways we ſhall both diſparage his *munificence*, and blindly cenſure his *government*.

As *being* itſelf, ſo every *faculty* with which we are indued, was originally the *gift* of God. All *ſuperior capacities* of mind, and every *diſtinguiſhing excellence* of nature, are derived from his overflowing goodneſs, and the effects of his almighty power. And, of conſequence, all the *various degrees* of *natural perfection*, which appear in the rational and more exalted part of the univerſe, and the *different advantages* for improvement, and the attainment of happineſs, are divine *gifts*; and cannot, with the leaſt propriety, be repreſented under any *other* character. "The "ſame may be ſaid of the *ſituation* of "mankind, the *age* in which they live, "the *outward circumſtances* in which they "were originally placed; of the *difference*

" of their *means of knowledge* ariſing from SERM.
" their *birth*, *education*, *opportunities* for I.
" getting light and inſtruction, and from
" the *politeneſs*, *ingenuity*, and *refinement*,
" or the *ignorance*, *rudeneſs* and *barbarity*,
" of the particular country where their
" lot is caſt, from the *incouragement* that
" is therein given to freedom of thought
" and enquiry, or the *difficulties* and *oppreſ-*
" *ſions* which it labours under, and, laſtly,
" from the goodneſs and uſefulneſs, or the
" depravity and dangerous tendency, of the
" *public principles* that happen to prevail
" there, and are eſtabliſh'd by cuſtom and
" authority." All theſe things, and what-
ever there is beſides of a *like* kind, which
either belongs to conſtitution of *nature*,
or is merely owing to the diſpoſition and
conduct of *providence*, are the *gifts* of the
Creator and Preſerver of the world: Which
he was, ſtrictly ſpeaking, under *no* obliga-
tion to communicate; and may therefore,
" confer them in what *proportions*, and
" with all the *variety*, that his infinite
" wiſdom ſhall think moſt expedient."

IF none are *injured*, the diſtribution of
favours is moſt certainly *free*, and at the *diſ-*

SERM. I.

cretion of him by whom they are beſtowed. And to aſſert the contrary, converts what is *pure bounty* into a *debt*; into a neceſſary act of *juſtice*: It leaves indeed no room at all for the exerciſe of *goodneſs*, nor for any *obligation* of the creature to its creator. But yet, in *none* of theſe inſtances, can it with the leaſt face of reaſon be imagined, that the natural and ſovereign proprietor of all things acts *arbitrarily*, or from an undue *reſpect of perſons*; but ſolely for the more *compleat* and *extenſive* diſplay of his wiſdom and benignity. Being not obliged, in ſtrict equity, to make *all* his creatures of the ſame rank, nor conſequently to allot to *all* preciſely the ſame advantages; and, "for the ſame reaſon, being "not bound to make *every individual*, in "any *diſtinct ſpecies* of created being, exactly *equal* with reſpect to moral excellence, and capacities for knowledge and "happineſs:" He has in fact expreſſed his goodneſs to *all*, but at the ſame time, ordained and fixed a beautiful and moſt admirable *diverſity*; which, as it was a conſideration of *wiſdom* only, he muſt be at full liberty to do.

IGNO-

IGNORANCE and ſuperficial conceptions have generally this effect, to make men captious and impertinently inquiſitive, as well as preſumptuous and *raſh* in their cenſures. We are apt to condemn not only what we *plainly ſee* to be wrong, but every method of conduct which we cannot thoroughly and diſtinctly *explain.* And this is grounded on a principle that the pride of human nature ſeems to be extreamly fond of, tho' it be too abſurd to be openly avowed and defended, and that is, that every deſign and operation of divine providence, that *is in itſelf* fit and reaſonable; muſt *appear to us* to be fit and reaſonable; or, in other words, that all the *ſprings*, and *cauſes*, and *uſes* of it, muſt be *particularly* known and perceived by us: And if we cannot *aſſign* the juſt and proper reaſons for it, we reflect no further, but draw this concluſion all at once----that there is neither *reaſon*, nor *wiſdom*, in it. Whereas our own *little* experience of what paſſes among ourſelves, and the *ſcanty tract* of obſervation to which we are at preſent confined, may juſtly be expected to teach us greater *modeſty*. For as the ſchemes SERM. I.

and

SERM. I. and deſigns of *ſome men* are quite impenetrable by *others*, we may fairly ſuppoſe, judging by the rule of *analogy*, which in this caſe can hardly deceive us, that the deſigns of ſome *ſuperior beings*, tho' perfectly right and well-conducted, may be equally impenetrable by the *wiſeſt* of mankind: And if we carry this neceſſary analogy, and correſpondence of things in the courſe of nature, ſtill higher, it will follow, that the vaſt deſigns of *an infinite mind* in various inſtances, not only *may*, but *muſt*, be either abſolutely inſcrutable, or but imperfectly comprehended, by the moſt exalted *created* underſtanding. The *end* propoſed may be at too great a diſtance, to be clearly diſcerned--- or the *means* too complicated, to be rightly and accurately diſtinguiſhed--- and their *connections* with each other, and with the end itſelf, too minute and nice, to be traced in their proper order and influence--- and yet unerring knowledge may direct every ſtep, and *harmony* and *good* be the reſult of all. However, ſhallow and perplexed as our apprehenſions are, a thoughtful and curious enquirer will eaſily diſcover ſuch appearances of *wiſdom* in

in *all* the more remarkable events of pro- SERM. vidence, as are ſufficient both to raiſe ad- I. miration, and inſpire reverence and humility: ſufficient to ſilence *atheiſtical* objections, and ſatisfy the mind *in general*, till either the ſcene is more perfectly *diſcloſed*, as it frequently happens in the preſent world; or that more improved and inlarged ſtate, which reaſon itſelf ſtrongly prompts us to expect hereafter, preſents us with *brighter* views, and enables us, by means of ſuperior capacities, to form more adequate and juſt ideas of the wonderful works and government of the almighty.--- In the mean time let us fix on this *baſis*, that as long as we can *trace* evident *foot-ſteps* of wiſdom, tho' we are unable to *unravel* the *whole ſcheme*, there can be no ground, in the nature of things, on which to ſuppoſe, that the diſpoſals and allotments of providence ſpring in *any degree* from capriciouſneſs, or an arbitrary partiality. For to be partial is to act without *a reaſon*, from mere *fancy* and *pleaſure*; and therefore to imagine this, while we ſee, at the ſame time, evident marks of a *rational* and *wiſe* deſign, is ſuppoſing (merely for

SERM. I. for the ſake of ſuppoſing) that *contradictions* are united, and exiſt together in the *ſame* ſubject.

I HAVE inſiſted ſo long on theſe things, becauſe, as was hinted before, the reaſoning here purſued will help us to ſettle very conſiderable difficulties, which are chiefly indeed levelled againſt revelation, but muſt, in their conſequences, overturn *all religion*. It is now proper to obſerve, that the phraſe, *reſpect of perſons*, has principally, if not always in ſcripture, a *judicial* meaning. Thus it is uſed, *Ye ſhall do no unrighteouſneſs in judgment: Thou ſhalt not* reſpect the perſon *of the poor*, nor honour the perſon *of the mighty*. Again, *Ye ſhall not* reſpect perſons *in judgment*; which is thus explained, *Ye ſhall hear the ſmall as well as the great, ye ſhall not be afraid* of the face of man: And this is expreſly ſaid in the 16th verſe, to be a *charge* given to the *judges* of the land. In another place *reſpect of perſons*, ſtill confined to a *judicial* ſenſe, ſtands to denote *corruption* and taking *bribes*, which, as it is there ſaid with great eloquence, *blind the eyes of the wiſe, and pervert the words of the righteous*. And this likewiſe

Levit. xix. 15.

Deut. i. 17.

Deut. xvi. 19.

is

is the conſtant notion, when it is applied to God, that there *is no iniquity with the* LORD, *nor reſpect of perſons, nor taking of gifts.* I ſhall only add, that thus it is evidently uſed in the Text. The great God is conſidered only in his judicial character, as the whole paſſage taken together plainly ſhews: For thus it ſtands connected,--- *The revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to every man according to his deeds---indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguiſh, upon every ſoul of man that doth evil---but glory, honour and peace to every man that worketh good; to the Jew firſt, and alſo to the Gentile: For there is* no reſpect of perſons *with God.* And now, having taken ſo large a compaſs in explaining the propoſition itſelf;

SERM. I.

2 Chron. xix. 7.

I proceed, in the ſecond place, to mention briefly ſome *important concluſions* that directly follow from it.---And, firſt, if it be a certain truth that God is *no reſpecter of perſons*, it neceſſarily follows, that there muſt be ſome *fixed* and *ſure* way, in which *all* mankind may find acceptance with him; and that this way has been in *ages paſt*, is *at preſent*, and will be *in generations*

SERM. I.

ons to come, one and the *ſame* with reſpect to all nations of men, according to their reſpective faculties, ſtations, and opportunities for improvement. For if the governour of the world is abſolutely *inacceſſible* to *ſome* of his ſubjects, while he is clement and *propitious* to others, or favours and rewards thoſe who are in *like* circumſtances upon *unequal* terms, how is it poſſible that he ſhould be an upright and *impartial* judge, when truth and equity are ſo manifeſtly perverted, and cannot indeed in the nature of things, upon this abſurd ſuppoſition, be *duly* and *regularly adminiſtered?* We are forced therefore, in order to vindicate the rectitude and honour of God's judicial proceedings, to allow, that there is *one invariable rule* of judgment with relation to *all*, ſuited to the difference of their conditions and characters: And this can be nothing elſe 'but the eternal 'moral law, and their acting conform-'ably to the *light* and *advantages* which they 'ſeverally enjoy;' ſo that *reaſon* plainly directs to the ſame ſentiment, as St. *Peter* received by *revelation* in the caſe of *Cornelius, viz.* that the moſt convincing demonſtration

monſtration which can be given, that God is no *reſpecter of perſons*, is this, that, *in every nation, he that feareth him, and worketh righteouſneſs, is* accepted *with him.* Acts x, 35. SERM. I.

AND from hence, again, it muſt be inferred in the ſecond place, that, by the impartial judgment of God, none will be either rewarded or puniſhed on the account of *mere names* and *outward diſtinctions*; that his favour cannot be confined to the enjoyment of certain *natural* or *accidental* privileges, nor his diſpleaſure be annexed to the want of them; that neither the *family* from which a perſon is deſcended, or the *country* to which he belongs, nor even his *religious profeſſion*, are the *rule* of judgment; and, of conſequence, that *chriſtians* will not be accepted *merely* as chriſtians, nor *heathens* rejected *merely as* heathens. For no reaſon can be aſſigned, why reſpecting the perſon of the *nominal* chriſtian, and condemning the heathen conſider'd *only as* ſuch; no reaſon, I ſay, can be aſſigned why this ſhould not be deemed as groſs a corruption and violation of *natural right*, as accepting the *rich* and deſpiſing the *poor*, in judgment. Our bleſſed Saviour

SERM. I.

viour therefore, that he might diſcourage, in the moſt effectual manner, all fond and preſumptuous confidence in *titles* and *profeſſions*, and *external characters*, expreſly aſſures us; *that not every one that ſaith unto* him, *Lord, Lord, ſhall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he alone that doth the will of his father who is in heaven.* On the other hand, St. *Paul* has aſſerted, in the ſtrongeſt terms, that the God of the univerſe did not leave himſelf without witneſs, even among the idolatrous *Gentiles*, *i. e.* not without ſufficient diſcoveries and teſtimonies of his being and providence,---- of his merciful diſpoſition towards *all* mankind, and inclination to accept and reward their religious and virtuous ſervices; in that *he did good, and gave rain from heaven and fruitful ſeaſons, filling their hearts with joy and gladneſs.* And the ſame Apoſtle declares himſelf more fully to this purpoſe in his eloquent ſpeech to the *Athenians*, in which this is the ſum of his doctrine; that the goodneſs of the Deity, which is ſo glorioufly diſplay'd in his creation and providential care of the whole human race without exception, had

Matt. vii. 27.

Acts xiv. 17.

a *direct* tendency, and was indeed *actually deſign'd*, to lead the *Gentile* world to worſhip and obey him, that they might render themſelves fit objects of his approbation. His words are as follows: That God *hath made of one blood all nations of men, to dwell upon all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they ſhould ſeek the Lord, if happily they might feel after him and find him.* — It appears then upon the whole, that the *tender mercies* of God, not only as Creator and Preſerver, but as Ruler and Judge, are *unlimited*, and extend to *all his works*.

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Acts xvii. 26, 27.

LET me add to this, that it neceſſarily follows, from the principle laid down in the text, *viz. That there is no reſpect of perſons with God*, that thoſe will be moſt highly eſteemed and honoured by him, who moſt faithfully cultivate their rational powers, and make the greateſt advances in moral rectitude and uſeful virtue. And this is likewiſe agreeable to Chriſt's own parable of the *talents*, in which there is a moſt judicious and noble

SERM. I. deſcription of the equitable diſtribution of things, in the great and ſolemn day of general recompence. For the foundation on which the whole is built is this *eſſential* law of equity, that every man's future reward will be in proportion to his *improvements*, and that his muſt bear a proportion to his *abilities*. If the *Heathen* therefore, whom we will ſuppoſe to be the perſon that has but *one talent*, makes a proficiency equal to that of the *Chriſtian*, who is entruſted with *five talents*, he muſt at the very *loweſt eſtimate* be intitled to the *ſame* reward, becauſe his qualifications are the ſame: — but I ſhould rather think to a much *ſuperior* reward, becauſe his advantages were leſs, and his obſtructions and difficulties far greater; and, conſequently, his integrity and diligence muſt have been more eminent, and, in the nature of the thing itſelf, more worthy and commendable. The profligate and *vitious Chriſtian* likewiſe, as he offends againſt clearer light, and more powerful motives to a better conduct, muſt, upon every principle of common juſtice, deſerve a ſeverer puniſhment than

the *dark* and *uninſtructed Pagan*: So that while he is captivated by evil habits, and indulges to uncharitableneſs, pride, or ſenſuality, his being a *Chriſtian* is really his unhappineſs; inſtead of affording any ſolid ground for arrogance and oſtentation, and the hope of extraordinary and *peculiar* favour. SERM. I.

THE *religious* and *moral* uſes, to which ſuch reflections as have been offer'd in the foregoing diſcourſe are naturally adapted, are theſe.—In the *firſt* place, they inſpire *high* and *amiable* thoughts of God, and repreſent him as a Being whom we can reverence *without terror*, and contemplate with *delight*; and remove all ſuch opinions concerning the *arbitrary capriciouſneſs* and *rigor* of his goverment, as render him the object of a *ſuperſtitious dread* and *averſion*, and deſtroy the very ſeeds of a *genuine*, *filial*, veneration and love of him.—Another uſe of entertaining ſuch apprehenſions concerning the Supreme Governor and Judge of all, as have been now inculcated, is this,—that they give us agreeable and pleaſing ſentiments of the ſtate of all our *fellow-creatures*, endowed as we

SERM. I. are with rational powers, and ſubject to the ſame univerſal authority of heaven. Whereas the thought of their being cut off from the hope of *divine favour*, and abandoned to *deſtruction* and *miſery*, would neceſſarily create a ſenſible pain, and the moſt melancholy reflections in a good-natured and generous mind; and make him ſurvey the world with a *pity* mixed with *horror*, which he now ſurveys with *complacency* and *inward ſatisfaction*. And beſides, theſe notions of the Deity are directly calculated to inſpire into mankind a more refined ſenſe of *humanity*, and an univerſal ſpirit of *benevolence* and friendſhip, as well as a *delight* in each other. But if we conceive of that great Being, to whom we are accountable, as *arbitrary* and *partial* in his proceedings, this may have a very corrupt influence upon our own temper: For it is too natural for us to treat thoſe with *contempt* at leaſt, if not with *cruelty*, whom we imagine that *God himſelf* has rejected and *abandoned*. — *Thirdly*, we may learn, from the doctrine of St. *Paul* in the text, a very important branch of our own *moral duty*,

and that is, the practice of ſtrict and *univerſal juſtice* in all the concerns and offices of life: And particularly that in all caſes of *right* which come before us, whether as placed in ſtations of civil authority, or as parents and maſters of families, we decide as exactly as poſſible according to reaſon and the *real merit* of things; being neither influenc'd by affection, nor ſowred by paſſion, nor blinded by prejudice; neither corrupted by the love of ſordid gain, nor tranſported by anger or revenge. —In the *laſt* place, nothing can poſſibly be a ſtronger encouragement to virtue, and diſſuaſive from vice, in *all* ranks and ſtations, than this thought, —that the upright and impartial Judge of mankind will conſider *no diſtinction* at his tribunal, but that of the *good* or *bad*, the *well* or *ill-deſerving*; that the mean condition of the *poor* will not excite in him a falſe compaſſion to the perverſion of juſtice, nor riches and the moſt pompous titles procure *one ſingle mark* of approbation: In ſhort, when the virtues of the loweſt will be equally regarded with thoſe of the greateſt, the injured vindicated, the pride

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of tyrants and oppreſſors humbled, and the vices of all receive a ſuitable recompence.

AND it ought to be particularly remembred, that in that *grand* and moſt *awful* day of *deciſion*, nothing will procure the approbation of the ſupreme Ruler of men, but a character that is *conſiſtent*, and carries, throughout the whole of it, a ſincere regard to *every* branch of virtue. A character that is throughout vitious will indeed be *conſiſtent*, but not *amiable*. But where it is an irregular compound of good and evil qualities, there is both a diſagreeable *deformity* and a manifeſt *abſurdity* in it, it may juſtly be ſtiled *monſtrous* in the moral world, as it is a mixture of qualities that are utterly diſproportionate, that neceſſarily deſtroy each other, and therefore cannot ſubſiſt together in reality, but only in outward appearance. If, for inſtance, a perſon is rigidly juſt, but at the ſame time of an *inſenſible* and *unrelenting* temper, deſtitute of mercy and compaſſion; it may fairly be preſumed that he looks on *juſtice* in no other light, than as the moſt *prudent ſcheme* to advance his reputation and

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temporal advantage. If he be generous, but abandoned to *ſenſuality* and *intemperance*; his *generoſity* cannot be conſider'd as an improved and cultivated virtue, but only as the reſult of a good *natural* diſpoſition. If he affects a ſolemn air of piety, and is very exact and punctual in all the outward forms of devotion, but is at the ſame time *proud* and *revengeful*, and fraudulent in his dealings; his *religion* is nothing elſe but *ſolemn impertinence*. For what reaſon can be aſſigned why any man ſhould be juſt but not *charitable*, generous but not *temperate*, devout but not *honeſt*; unleſs it be that natural conſtitution, or prudence, inclines him to cultivate the *appearance* of ſome virtues, which he has no *particular* temptation to relinquiſh, and that he hath no regard at all to virtue for *itſelf*, but only as it ſuits his inclination or his intereſt? Such an inconſiſtent behaviour muſt argue either want of ſenſe, or want of reſolution, or an abſolute contempt of religion. The *virtues*, be they ever ſo amiable and beneficial, which are thus obſcured and diſfigured by being joined with groſs and enormous *vices*, can

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SERM. I. neither expect eſteem from men, nor a *reward* from God. Whereas if we are careful to exemplify in our lives every inſtance of true goodneſs, and our regards to it are not *conſtitutional* and *capricious*, by ſhort-lived ſtarts and intervals, but ſteady and uniform; our example, (allowing only for the neceſſary imperfection and frailty of human nature) will be a finiſhed picture of moral beauty: Every particular virtue will adorn and illuſtrate all the reſt; and the peculiar lovelineſs and glory of the whole character will ſpring from their *united luſtre*.

SERMON II.

The Scripture doctrine of Juſtification explained.

ROM. x. 3.

For they being ignorant of God's righteouſneſs, and going about to eſtabliſh their own righteouſneſs, have not ſubmitted themſelves unto the righteouſneſs of God.

AS mankind, in all ages, have invented ſuch *ſtrange* and *unaccountable* methods of ſerving God and ſecuring his favour, as one would think, could never be depended on where there is the loweſt degree

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gree of *underſtanding*, or capacity for *reaſoning*; and as Chriſtians themſelves bewildered and ſtupified by *ſounds*, ſo as not to attend to the *true ſenſe* of revelation, have deviſed various ſchemes to the ſame purpoſe groſſly *frivolous* and *abſurd*, as well as utterly *inſufficient* to anſwer the end propoſed; whereby, notwithſtanding all their *ſuperior* advantages, they have really fallen ſhort of what *the light of nature itſelf* plainly and ſtrongly intimates: I thought it might be of great uſe to explain the neceſſary terms of *pardon*, and *acceptance* with God, as they are propoſed and repreſented in the goſpel; and to ſhew that what may, at firſt ſight, ſeem *peculiar* in them, has nothing in it *capricious* and *arbitrary*; but is exactly and wiſely *adapted* to the *conſtitution* and *preſent ſtate* of human nature, and, "ſo "far *coincides* with the univerſal and im-"mutable law of *reaſon*."

THE *favour* of the Deity is allowed by all, who acknowledge him under the character of ſupreme moral Governor, to be an ineſtimable bleſſing, and an eſſential part of the true felicity of every intelligent

ligent creature. It is likewiſe admitted, as a neceſſary conſequence from this firſt unqueſtionable principle, that it is of the higheſt poſſible moment to us to be the *objects* of his eſteem and complacency.— But when we come to reſolve the next queſtion, how this ſupreme privilege of our nature may be *moſt certainly ſecured*, "here the *confuſion* begins; we are *di-* "*vided* in our ſentiments, and *loſt* in "dark diſputations: We follow our *pe-* "*culiar* ſchemes, *all* expecting the ſame "happy event hereafter, though it be "manifeſt that theſe ſchemes, in the "*conſequences* that directly reſult from "them, are quite *incompatible*, and ſub- "verſive of each other; and that the "ſame end cannot be ſerved by *all alike* "(if they are purſued and acted upon ac- "cording to their moſt *natural* tendency) "unleſs it can be *equally* promoted by "plain and irreconcileable *contradic-* "*tions.*"

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MISERABLE indeed, *inexpreſſibly* miſerable, would the fate of mankind be *by nature*, if this grand point was in itſelf *ambiguous*, and ſcarce *determinable*; miſerable

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ſerable would it be, and a ſolid foundation for gloomineſs and anxiety of mind, if there were ſo many *unavoidable chances* againſt our ſupreme happineſs, as this notion muſt include in it: If we were thus neceſſitated to grope our way in the *dark*, in the midſt of *dangers*; ſtrongly *concern'd* and *ſollicitous*, and at the ſame time *perplex'd* and *uncertain*, about the final reſult of our enquiries. But if we *actually miſs* the direct and ſure path, when, by attention and care, we might eaſily have diſcovered and traced it *right*, our misfortune is ſo far from being leſſened, that it muſt, upon the whole, be increaſed and aggravated, by a conſcious ſenſe of *guilt*. Our *miſery*, the leſs it is owing to an original cauſe in nature, and the more it may be aſcribed to voluntary error, will always be, in proportion, the more ſeverely and deeply *felt*. — And to what do theſe reflections lead? Moſt certainly to this general concluſion: That diveſting ourſelves of all *prejudice*, that with an *ingenuous uncorrupted* temper, with *calm*, *engaged* and *ſerious* minds, we apply ourſelves to examine "what is the

"*true*

" *true* and *only* way, in which the infi- SERM.
" nite Creator and ſovereign Ruler of the II.
" world is determined to diſpenſe his
" *mercy*; or, upon *what terms*, we may
" reaſonably expect to find *acceptance*
" with him."

THIS fundamental article of religion is ſtiled by St. *Paul*, in the text, *the righteouſneſs of God:* — And the ſum of his doctrine on this head, and eſpecially in his epiſtle to the *Romans*, is as follows. — That *perfect innocence* is not the *condition* inſiſted on, becauſe it is what mankind can never expect to attain to, in their preſent ſtate of weakneſs and frailty; and, upon *this* foot, they are abſolutely excluded from the hope of *mercy*, ſince *all have ſinned, and* fallen *ſhort of the glory of God.* That the *Gentiles* in particular had, in innumerable inſtances, deviated from *the law of nature*, and therefore were in a *loſt* and *deſperate* ſtate, if the term required was *perfect* obedience to that unchangeable moral law: And that the *Jews* could not be *juſtified* according to the ſtrict tenor of their *law of works*; which was *rigorous* and *inflexible*, running

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ning in this discouraging strain: *Cursed* is *every one that continueth not in* all *things, which are written in the book of the law,* Galat. iii. 10. *to do them.* — What then is to be done? Is the misery of the *moral* world quite *remediless?* Is there *no way*, in which they may secure the *favour* of their supreme Governor and Judge? "*None at all*, but "by introducing a *milder* law condescending and merciful to our infirmities, and which accepts of *sincerity* instead of complete obedience." Such a scheme, therefore, as *this*, St. *Paul* concludes from the whole, was *necessary* to be introduced; this he asserts to be the *Christian* scheme; this he strenuously argues for as the *only* scheme, by which any man can be *justified* in the sight of God: This he stiles being *justified by faith without the deeds of the law; the righteousness of God without the law*, i. e. without the necessity of an *exact* and *unerring* conformity to it; *the law of faith*; and *the law of righteousness.*

BUT because this is a matter of the highest importance, as it immediately concerns the very *essential* frame and constitution

ſtitution of Chriſtianity, and our juſt and well ſupported hopes of pardon and eternal ſalvation, I ſhall explain it a little more diſtinctly; in order to clear it both from the charge of being an *irrational* and *arbitrary* ſcheme, and from the *darkneſs* and *confuſion* in which it has been involved. What then is intended by *the righteouſneſs of faith*, which the text repreſents as *God's righteouſneſs*?—The ſame Apoſtle's account of it is, I think, evidently this: That both *Jews* and *Gentiles* were upon embracing the goſpel, and profeſſing faith in Chriſt, freed from the guilt of all their *paſt ſins*, and brought into a ſtate of reconciliation with God. If it be aſked *what faith* it was, that intitled them to this eminent and glorious privilege: I anſwer in St. *Paul*'s own words, *if thou ſhalt confeſs with thy mouth the Lord Jeſus, and ſhalt believe in thine heart that God hath raiſed him from the dead, thou ſhalt be ſaved.* Should it be inquired farther, "What connection *this faith* has with "*ſincerity*, which I have ſuppoſed to be "the *univerſal condition* of acceptance "with God under the diſpenſation of the "goſpel,"

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Rom. x, 9.

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" goſpel ;" and the *general head*, to which all the qualifications therein ſpecified are, and muſt be, reduced? I anſwer, again, " that in the *firſt* age of Chriſtianity, eſ- " pecially, the receiving and owning a " religion againſt the *united* force of *pre-* " *poſſeſſion*, *corrupt paſſion*, and *worldly* " *intereſt*, the embracing a religion that " was *condemned* by publick authority, " and every where *deſpiſed* and *perſecut-* " *ed*, a religion that *reſtrained* all crimi- " nal exceſſes, and *required* ſublime re- " finement and purity of heart, and the " ſtricteſt outward virtue; that ſuch a " conduct, as this, was a *ſingular* proof " of *integrity*; and, farther, that *faith*, " in *this* view of it, was ſuch an *uncom-* " *mon* inſtance of *moral rectitude*, as was " very properly *diſtinguiſhed* by ſpecial " marks of the divine approbation: And, " finally, that the *faith* which juſtified " could, in the nature of things, be that " *only*, which the ſearcher of all hearts " knew to be *ſincere*; that *alone*, which " was accompanied with an honeſt un- " diſſembled reſolution to amend *all* for- " mer errors, and practiſe *every* branch

" of

" of the extenſive and exalted goodneſs SERM.
" which Chriſtianity requires; and would II.
" *actually* produce, as far as opportuni-
" ties were allowed for it, *all* the fruits of
" *moral righteouſneſs.*" So that Chriſtian *juſtifying faith* neceſſarily includes, in the very idea of it, " uprightneſs and probi-
" ty of heart;" and was therefore *accepted* by the wiſdom and condeſcending goodneſs of the univerſal Sovereign, for the *remiſſion of ſins* that were paſt. But then it muſt be conſider'd, that it was for the remiſſion of *theſe only*; and that in order to our being juſtified at laſt, before the awful tribunal of God, *faith* muſt be allowed to have its *natural* influence, and ſhow itſelf to be a *lively* and *efficacious* principle, by regulating every evil diſpoſition, controuling all licentious appetites, and exciting to a conſtant courſe of piety, and to every good work. Hence it is, that St. *John* has repreſented the faith of a Chriſtian as *untainted* by the pollutions of the world, and *ſuperior* to all the ſnares and temptations of it: *This*, ſays he, *is the victory that overcometh the world, even our* FAITH. And St. *Paul* 1 John v. 10.

SERM. II. has deſcribed the *ſubſtance* of *true* chriſtianity thus, *faith working by love:* Which he expreſſes in the parallel texts by other terms, by the *new creature*, or an entire converſion from vice and impurity to holineſs and rectitude of life, as if the *moral conſtitution* of the man was quite *modelled* and *formed a new*; and by *keeping the commandments of God.*

Gal. v. 6. Chap. vi. 15.

1 Cor. vii. 17.

FROM this ſhort ſtate of the doctrine, deduced not from *obſcure* and *figurative phraſes*, but from moſt *expreſs* and *plain teſtimonies* of holy ſcripture, every attentive mind will eaſily diſcern the entire correſpondence that there is between the two apoſtles, St. *Paul* and St. *James*, in the great point of *Juſtification*. This affair has been ſtrangely puzzled by religious *ſchematiſts* without the leaſt apparent ground for it. Difficulties have been ſtarted about a thing in itſelf moſt evident; and greatly increaſed by the laborious trifling, and the ſubtle blind diſtinctions, apply'd to the ſolution of them. Nay, too many among us, in the intemperance and heat of *controverſy*, have been apt to repreſent one of theſe apoſtles as leſs

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evangelical than the other, for no other reaſon but becauſe there are fewer paſſages, in his writings, that can be *accommodated* to their favourite ſchemes. *I am of James, and I of Paul*, ſeems to be too juſt a deſcription of the inward *ſentiment* of the mind, upon theſe occaſions; though they have not been actually uſed as *terms* of *diſtinction*. But be cool, and deliberate a little, and ſeriouſly aſk yourſelves the following queſtions, which are as rational and forcible *now*, as they were in the firſt times of chriſtianity. — *Was* James *crucified for you? Or were you baptized into the name of* Paul? *Or is* Chriſt *divided?* Or can the doctrines aſſerted by his *immediate followers*, from whom we derive our knowledge of the eſſential principles of the goſpel, claſh and interfere with each other? Were ſome thoroughly verſed in the *myſteries*, the *deep things*, of chriſtianity, and others but *ſlightly* and *ſuperficially* inſtructed; *miniſters* of the *letter*, and not of the *ſpirit?* May one be *exalted* and another *degraded*, when the authority of *both* is exactly the ſame, and their commiſſion and directions are equally di-

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vine? There *can* be no ground for ſuppoſitions of this kind, unleſs we allow, at the ſame time, that the very *foundations* of our religion are *ſhaken*; and, in the inſtance before us, there plainly *is* none.

FOR what is it that St. *Paul* has advanc'd, why that we are *juſtified by faith without the deeds of the law*. — And what is the *ſenſe* and *intent* of this propoſition? Let it be interpreted by his own *avowed doctrine* in innumerable other paſſages (which is but common ſenſe, and common juſtice) and it can poſſibly amount to no more than this. "That the only "condition of pardon and juſtification is "*a ſincere faith*, producing a uniform "courſe of *ſincere obedience* to the laws "of God; and not *abſolute uncorrupted* "*innocence*, or the *perfection of virtue*." And has St. *James* ever aſſerted the *contrary*? Nay, is not this the very thing, which he ſo earneſtly contends for; *this*, I ſay, "that *obedience* and *works of righteouſ-* "*neſs* are the *life* of faith?" — Or ſuppoſe the *former* to have meant, that "the "*ceremonial law* was, under the goſpel "conſtitution, no part of *acceptable* reli-

"gion;"

" gion;" has the *latter* ſo much as intimated any thing in *oppoſition* to it? — If again we take St. *Paul* thus; " That " upon *faith* in Chriſt conſidered (which " it juſtly might be in thoſe days) as a " remarkable inſtance of *integrity* and " *moral virtue*, God was pleaſed to be " propitious and receive his guilty crea- " tures into *favour*, notwithſtanding " their *former* irregularities;" there is *ſtill* no appearance of a *contradiction*: For the other Apoſtle has not touched on *this topic*, but treated the ſubject in a quite *different* light. SERM. II.

IF, indeed, St. *Paul* had aſſerted ſuch libertine principles as theſe " that *faith* " *alone*, without the practice of immuta- " ble *moral* duties, was ſufficient to our " *final juſtification* before the judgment " ſeat of Chriſt;" if inſtead of *expreſſly* declaring, that *without holineſs no man ſhall*, he had affirm'd, " that without " holineſs any man *may*, *ſee the Lord*:" he would then have contradicted St. *James*, and the ſober ſentiment of every rational being in the univerſe. His principles muſt then have ſunk his character, and

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render'd his name infamous. No baſer aſperſion can be thrown upon him, no greater indignity offer'd to his memory. To call him a deluded *enthuſiaſt* is doing him honour, in compariſon with repreſenting him thus as an *advocate* for *licentiouſneſs*. But as he has, in all his epiſtles, inculcated *morality* as an indiſpenſable part of the *Chriſtian* character; as he has declared, in the plaineſt and moſt forcible terms, that *to be carnally minded is death*, that *groſs* and *habitual* offenders, of *all* kinds, ſhall hereafter be infallibly *excluded* the *everlaſting kingdom of God*; and that, *in Chriſt Jeſus*, nothing can be depended upon as of any real *ſignificancy*, but *a working faith*: What is this but laying it down as the ſcheme and fixed law of the goſpel, that in order to our continuance in a juſtified ſtate, and to our ſolemn abſolution by the ſupreme Judge, our faith muſt have this *effect* upon us, to produce *love* and *piety* towards God, and acts of *beneficence* and *goodneſs* to our fellow-creatures? — What is it but declaring with St. *James*, that we muſt *ſhew our* faith *by our* works, and that *as the body without*

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the ſpirit *is dead, ſo faith without* works *is dead alſo*; and ſubſcribing, as the reſult of all, "to the ſame general concluſion, "*viz.* that *a man is juſtified by* works, "*and not by* faith only?" — According to the *one*, faith, as a conſpicuous example and proof of virtue, *firſt* recommended to the favour of God; and this poſition the other has no where diſputed: But according to *both*, if the profeſſed Chriſtian afterwards held *the truth in unrighteouſneſs*, and continued to have *faith alone*, and had not *works*, "he was abſo-"lutely cut off from the hope of ſalva-"tion." Thus have I ſhown, upon the whole, the true ſenſe of that phraſe, *the righteouſneſs of God*; which the unbelieving *Jews* were *ignorant* of, and in the place of which, they fought to eſtabliſh *their own righteouſneſs*.

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What the Apoſtle intended by *that*, I now proceed, in the ſecond place, to conſider. — That none of the blind and giddy race of mankind can expect to be juſtified by a *law* that requires *perfect rectitude*, is the clear voice of *reaſon*, as well as the unqueſtionable doctrine of the *goſpel*.

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And that our moral righteouſneſs, when carried to the ſublimeſt height, and cultivated in the utmoſt extent which it is at preſent capable of, cannot be ſaid, in *ſtrict juſtice*, to *merit* the glorious reward of eternal life; this likewiſe muſt be the *natural ſentiment* of every wiſe and conſiderate man, as it is the *profeſs'd judgment* of St. *Paul*. Both theſe are certain and eſtabliſh'd maxims in the nature of things, and not the *new* and *peculiar* principles of revealed religion.

But what of all this? — Becauſe mankind are *incapable* of pleaſing their Maker, by yielding an *abſolute* and *invariable* obedience to the eternal laws of righteouſneſs; does it follow from hence, "that they cannot render themſelves *ac-*
"*ceptable* to him, by a univerſal courſe
"of *ſincere* obedience?" Are *good* diſ-
"poſitions, and *ſincere* endeavours to ſerve and honour him, of *no ſignificancy* with the wiſeſt and moſt compaſſionate of all Beings, "for want of ſomething,
"which the very *original conſtitution* of
"our nature has put it quite *out of our*
"*power*?" Is the *prevailing* turns and

biaſs of our minds inſufficient to *plead* for us; "and are our *involuntary* and *unallowed* "imperfections of weight enough, even "with *impartial mercy*, to *condemn* us?" Becauſe virtue does not *properly*, and in an *exact* notion of *equity*, *merit* the tranſcendent honour and felicity, to which it is the gracious appointment of God that it ſhall be hereafter advanced, "has it, "therefore, no *lovelineſs* and *worth* in it, "to render it a *fit* and *ſuitable* object of "*peculiar* favour and complacency?" Theſe, ſurely, are inferences drawn at random, and by confounding things that have no relation to each other: And it ſeems, on the contrary, to be one of the *firſt* principles that the light of nature teaches; that the righteous God muſt *neceſſarily*, and determin'd by his own eſſential *moral rectitude*, love *righteouſneſs*, and take pleaſure in the *upright*. St. *Paul* therefore, when he upbraided the miſtaken and conceited *Jews*, with going about to eſtabliſh *their own righteouſneſs*, could not deſign to depreciate *perſonal virtue* and *inherent goodneſs*, becauſe theſe are the *chief* excellence and honour of

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every

SERM. II. *every* intelligent Being; and, when they are the prevailing temper and habit of the mind, render a man more *worthy* of the *eſteem* of his fellow-creatures, and better *qualified* for the *grace* of God, than any other thing, without them, can *poſſibly* do.

IF we compare together *mere faith* and *moral righteouſneſs*, the latter has vaſtly the *preference* with reſpect to intrinſick and real value. There may be a faith perfectly *orthodox*, or a *clear* and *firm* aſſent to all ſpeculative principles of religion, in the *vileſt* and moſt *deteſtable* characters. For even *the* Devils *believe*, and *tremble*. Nay, if God from his mere *pleaſure*, and to ſhew forth his *ſovereignty* had ſo determined, theſe ſame *Devils* might have been, as far as I can ſee, *imputatively* cloathed with the righteouſneſs of another, and might alſo, under that ſplendid covering have been preſented before the ſupreme juſtice as *perfect*, with the ſame ſtrict truth and propriety, as this privilege can be allowed to the ungodly and ſinful part of *Adam*'s race; continuing *ſinful* and *ungodly*. And yet, ſurely,

ſurely, if while they were dreſſed in theſe robes *not their own*, they retained their malignant and diabolical *diſpoſitions*, " they muſt in every ſenſe of the word, " that carries with it *guilt*, *horror*, and *ig-* " *nominy*, have remained *Devils* ſtill."— But could you ſuppoſe " a *moral change* " to be effected, in the *temper* and *in-* " *ward complexion* of the Apoſtate Spi- " rits;" were it poſſible for them " to " become thoroughly and habitually *be-* " *nevolent*, *merciful*, *humble*, *reverent* " of God, and adorn'd with *complete* " *rectitude* of nature;" they would no longer appear, as they did, before *diſ-* *graceful*, they would no longer excite *dread* and *abhorrence*, but be really turn- ed into *angels of light*. The conſtitution of their nature would be harmonious and regular; and conſider'd merely, with re- ſpect to the qualities they were *then* poſ- ſeſs'd of, they muſt of neceſſity be *grateful* and *acceptable* to God. But the making them in themſelves *amiable*, and *juſt* objects of *eſteem*, is an effect that no clearneſs, extent, or ſtrength of *faith*, no *imputation* of what does not inherently belong to them,

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them, no *borrowed* righteouſneſs can ever produce.

AND indeed the language of the goſpel is evidently in this ſtrain, that we are juſtified, not by the *perfect righteouſneſs*, but by the *death* of Chriſt: The New Teſtament aſſures us, that not his obedience, but our own faith, is *imputed to us for righteouſneſs*; that *God ſent his ſon in the likeneſs of ſinful fleſh, that the righteouſneſs of the law might be fulfilled* in, or by *us*, and not *by him* for us; and that the great Governor of the world, in the revelation of his juſt and impartial judgment, will *render unto every man*, not as works, performed by *another*, have been *transferr'd* and *placed* to his account, but *according to* his own *deeds*. Nay, farther, ſhould we admit this doctrine to be *true*, mankind could no longer be conſider'd as *in* themſelves, and *ſolely in* themſelves, *moral* and *accountable* creatures; nor would the future judgment "be an e-"quitable diſtribution of *rewards* and "*puniſhments*, but only God's awful and "uncontroulable execution of his own "*arbitrary* and *irreverſible decrees*." —

By

by which ſuppoſition the *baſis* of chriſti- SERM.
anity is undermined, and the whole frame II.
of it falls to the ground; nor "does it
"fall *alone*, but buries in its *ruins*, the
"religion of *nature* and *reaſon* too."
And beſides this, the doctrine, which I
am now oppoſing, renders *repentance*, *perſonal* reformation, and *inherent* rectitude entirely needleſs. For if *a ſolemn covenant* was ratified between God and the Mediator, that he ſhould *fulfil the law* for the *elect* race of mankind; and that they ſhould be reckoned *perfectly righteous* in *his* righteouſneſs, and as having *perfectly obey'd* in *his* obedience — What is there *left* for *man* to do? God has been *ſatisfied* in *all* his demands; his *law*, his *honour*, his rigorous relentleſs *juſtice are all* ſatisfied; and therefore, in ſtrict equity, he can demand *nothing farther*. The believer indeed out of *mere generoſity* may, if he pleaſes, add works of *righteouſneſs* of *his own*, but his main intereſt is *ſecure* without it: And the *favour* of God, in virtue of the antecedent *covenant* made with Chriſt, (and *fulfilled* on his part) is *certain* and *irrevocable*. Add to

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all that has been ſaid, that this notion, of a *ſubſtituted* and *vicarious* righteouſneſs, ſeems abſurd even to common ſenſe, and to the moſt *natural* and *eaſy* reflections of men. For *obedience* and *righteouſneſs* are, in the nature of the things themſelves, perſonal qualities, and entirely ſo. Every man is *that only* (and can be nothing elſe) which he is *in himſelf*. "If he is *prophane*, *proud*, "and *intemperate*, he can never be the "*leſs* ſo, for *another man's* being perfectly "devout, humble, and regular." If he is *unjuſt*, he muſt be unjuſt *ſtill*; if *unholy*, unholy *ſtill*. And if his vices are *naturally* and *intrinſically* deteſtable, "he, "alſo, muſt continue to be the *fit* and "*proper* ſubject of diſlike and averſion." And it ſhould be conſider'd further, that the *obedience* of *Chriſt* (which, upon *every ſcheme*, he was *only* capable of yielding as a *ſubjected* and *dependent* creature) that the *obedience* of *Chriſt*, I ſay, was *wholly due for himſelf* and therefore could, by no means, be an *equivalent* for the *obedience* that was due from *any other ſingle being* in the univerſe. Far be it from us, then, to impute this confus'd heap of errors

rors to the Chriſtian doctrine, which is in *all* the parts of it worthy of God, and *chiefly* recommends itſelf to the eſteem and reverence of the *truly wiſe*. — For the *ſum* of it, as it reſults from the foregoing diſcourſe, which has been built on plain evidences and demonſtrations of ſcripture, is in ſhort this, "That the law of *faith*, "by which *Chriſtians* are ſaid to be *juſ-* "*tified*, amounts to *no more*, as to the "main ſubſtance and *intent* of it, than "the law of *ſincerity*:" — That faith was never deſigned to denote the *bare aſſent* of the mind to principles of truth, nor ever ſtands for a barren and inefficacious *ſpeculation*; but always ſignifies an internal and genuine *principle* of *piety* and *habitual virtue*, is always conſider'd as an *act* of integrity, an eminent *example* and *demonſtration* of it. — That if our faith *really* led to *immorality*, it would be preſumption and blaſphemy to ſtile it a *divine* faith: But as it teaches us to aſpire after the *ſublimeſt* height and *utmoſt* extent of virtue, if our conduct be licentious and diſſolute, it muſt, upon this very account, be the more ſcandalous and inexcuſable. — SERM. II.

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That immoral actions ſpeak *intelligibly*, and proclaim to all the world either that it is our opinion that our faith is *good for nothing*, and ought not to be allowed its *natural influence*; or elſe, that we are to be held by *no tye* and can ſet at *defiance* the moſt ſacred principles, which is an infallible ſign, that ſcarce a ſpark of *honour* or *probity* of mind is ſubſiſting within us. And for the very *ſame reaſon*, on which faith is *accepted* and rewarded when it is a mark of *integrity*, it muſt of neceſſity, be *rejected* as an inſufficient plea, by our upright and all-diſcerning Judge, when it is attended with flagrant *diſhoneſty*. So that upon the whole, the law *of righteouſneſs by faith* comes to much the ſame, if we take in the *foundation* and *true ſcope* of it, and *all the caſes* to which, by a parity of reaſon, it *may* and *muſt* be extended; it then, I ſay, comes "to much the ſame with that more *gene-*"*ral* rule laid down by St. *John*, that *he* "*that doth righteouſneſs is righteous.*" For *juſtifying faith*, as it is above explain'd, may with great propriety be ſtiled an act of *moral righteouſneſs*. It

ſprings

ſprings from virtue, and *terminates* in it: SERM.
" *In virtue*, the *ſincere practice* of which, II.
" according to the *light* and *advantages*
" which they ſeverally enjoy, may be
" conſider'd as *an uniform* and *invariable*
" law of righteouſneſs with reſpect to
" *all nations*; and a means of procuring
" indulgence and mercy for *many*, who
" never heard of *Chriſt*, from the Father
" and Friend of *the whole race of man-*
" *kind.*"

SERMON III.

Moral reflections on the hiſtory of *Joſeph.*

GEN. XXXIX. 9.

——How, then, can I do this great wickedneſs, and ſin againſt God!

THERE is no branch of ancient *private hiſtory* more remarkable, than that of the patriarch *Joſeph*: Whether we regard the *characters* of the actors, the *ſurpriſing* revolutions, the *extremes* of

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fortune, the *variety*, or *importance*, of the events contained in it. And of this hiſtory, there is no part more affecting and uſeful than that to which the text relates: If we conſider it either as affording an example of *manly reſolution*; or of *heroick virtue* firſt *oppreſſed*, and, in the end, *victorious* and *triumphant*; or with reſpect to the *moral* inſtructions that may be deduced from it. The ſubſtance of the fact is this: *Joſeph*, being betrayed by his brethren, was ſold as a ſlave to *Potiphar*, an officer of diſtinction under the king of *Egypt*. His good qualities gained him the eſteem and affection of his maſter, who preferred him to manage all the affairs of his family. — But here an accident happened, that was likely to have blaſted all his ſchemes of happineſs. The wife of *Potiphar* tempted him to *lewdneſs*: Which he, reflecting on the heinouſneſs of the crime of *adultery* in itſelf, (which is branded with *peculiar* infamy by every *civilized* nation, and held in the utmoſt deteſtation by almoſt all, who retain *any ſenſe* of the difference of good and evil) reflecting likewiſe on the baſeneſs of

of *ingratitude* and *treachery* towards ſo kind a benefactor, and the great offence he ſhould be guilty of againſt the Creator and Sovereign of the world, rejected with a warm and generous reſentment. Upon this the paſſions of his miſtreſs took another turn equally violent, and ſhe brought a falſe accuſation againſt him for attempting her chaſtity: And *Potiphar*, confiding in her honour, committed him to priſon. "Now he ſeems to have been "quite loſt, and abandoned to *miſery* and "*deſpair*;" but vain are the counſels of man: For this very circumſtance was the occaſion of his being introduced into the preſence of *Pharoah*, and of his appearing, again, on the ſtage of the world with extraordinary luſtre and dignity, for the preſervation and ſupport of his own family, which afterwards ſprang up into a great and flouriſhing nation. This account, every one muſt perceive, ſuggeſts ſeveral uſeful obſervations; among which I ſhall fix on two or three to be the ſubject of the following diſcourſe. SERM. III.

AND the FIRST is immediately pointed out to us by the text itſelf, *viz.* that the fear

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of God, and a ſerious regard to his authority, *is a moſt effectual preſervative* from all criminal indulgences. It was *this* that reſtrained *Joſeph* from complying with the looſe ſolicitations of his miſtreſs, and gave him a perfect ſuperiority and *command* over his paſſions. A ſenſe of the *injuſtice* of the action, and how highly provoking it muſt be to Heaven, had he been guilty of ſuch *vile perfidiouſneſs* againſt a man, who had uſed him with ſo much confidence and generoſity, kept under the impulſes of *ſenſe* and *appetite*, and quite baffled the force of this dangerous temptation. And a becoming reverence of the Deity will have the *ſame effect* in *all* mankind, upon all *other* occaſions, and in *every ſcene* of life. If it be only *occaſional*, it will, indeed, do no more than *check* our inclinations in ſome *particular* inſtances, and *limit* our exceſſes; but when it is become a fixed *habitual* principle, it will have an *uniform conſtant* efficacy in preſerving the paſſions *regular*, and the converſation *honeſt*, and *untainted* by any *groſs* degrees of wickedneſs. For no man was ever yet of ſo re-

ſolute and daring a temper, as to allow himſelf in a diſſolute courſe of life, under an immediate *quick* apprehenſion of the divine diſpleaſure: He *cannot* offend the Deity *at the ſame time* that he feels an inward eſteem of him, and gratitude for his benefits; nor *violate* any law, while he has a ſtrong conviction of the *wiſdom* and *goodneſs* of the power that enacted it. Theſe things are as abſolute contradictions, as that approbation and diſlike, reverence and contempt, love and hatred, ſhould be *exerciſed* towards the *ſame* object *at once:* So that our ſinful purſuits muſt either entirely extirpate the *fear* of God, or that will, of neceſſity, reform and cure our vices. SERM. III.

AND that this excellent principle ſhould have ſo powerful an influence againſt natural diſpoſition, cuſtom, the bewitching allurements of pleaſure, and the moſt inchanting proſpects of worldly advantage, will not ſeem ſtrange to us when we conſider; that it ſtrikes every *paſſion*, every *ſpring* of human actions, and includes in it *all* the moſt powerful *motives*, by which the conduct of mankind is determined.

SERM. III. If *intereſt* be the principal thing that ſways with us; *that*, ſurely, cannot be ſo certainly promoted, as by ſecuring the favour of the infinite God, and avoiding his diſpleaſure which is the ſoreſt of all evils. If we are governed by our *fears*; "he is the moſt formidable Being in the "univerſe to a depraved mind, that has "perverted its faculties, and tranſgreſſed "the law of its nature:" If by *hope*; "he is the ſupreme and an eternal good:" if by *love*; "he is moſt amiable and per-"fect excellence:" If by *gratitude*; "he is the cauſe of our exiſtence, and the "author of all our happineſs." Or do we regard *fitneſs*, *rectitude*, and *beauty* in actions, and would be thought not to be *driven* by the *terrors* of authority, but to chuſe virtue for *its own ſake* and for the intrinſic *reaſonableneſs* of it? — I would aſk, "what can be more *becom-*"*ing*, more agreeable to *human nature*, "to *eternal reaſon*, and *the nature of* "*things*," than to *eſteem* ſupreme perfection, to *venerate* unbounded wiſdom and power, and to be *fearful* of offending the greateſt and moſt excellent of all Beings,

Beings, the compaſſionate Father, uncontroulable Diſpoſer, and impartial Judge of mankind! The fear of God therefore, when it is a rooted principle in the heart, muſt reſtrain from the moſt intimate and highly favoured exceſſes; and beget an *invincible reſolution*, which no aſſaults can ſubdue or intimidate. SERM. III.

SECONDLY, In the courſe of our obſervations, on this paſſage of ſacred hiſtory, we are naturally led to conſider "the "*ſhamefulneſs* and *heinous guilt* of *ingra*-"*titude*." This was the *principal* thing that *Joſeph* urged, againſt committing the crime to which he was ſo ſtrongly excited: That his *maſter* had *committed all he* had *to his care*, there was *none greater in* the *houſe than* he, *neither* had *he kept back any thing from* him *but* his *wife*, (whom *all* laws, *divine* and *human* had guarded as the moſt *ſacred* and *inviolable* part of his property) — "*How then*, "ſays he, *can I do this great wickedneſs*, "how can I be guilty of this *baſe breach* "*of truſt*, againſt common equity and "the moſt endearing obligations of friend-"ſhip while I have any ſenſe of *inge*-

"*nuity*

SERM. III. "*nuity* towards my benefactor, or *reve-*
"*rence* of Almighty God!" As *a man*, ſuch a conduct towards one of his own ſpecies was abſolutely *indefenſible*; but from *a ſervant* to his maſter, who had highly careſſed and honoured him, and loaded him with ſignal favours, it was ſo utterly *unnatural*, that whoever attempted it muſt be *extravagantly* wicked, and ſunk to the very loweſt pitch of degeneracy. *Ingratitude*, added to *adultery*, would have rendered what is, in itſelf, one of the *fouleſt* ſtains to *man's* nature infinitely more black and deteſtable; and have ſwelled the guilt of it to ſo vaſt a ſize, that it would ſcarce have admitted of any further aggravation.

THIS, indeed, agrees with the unanimous opinion of mankind in all ages. They have ever *ſtigmatized* ingratitude, as the utmoſt depravation and reproach of human nature. *Other* immoralities have been *moderated* and *ſpeciouſly* varniſhed over; but this has been conſtantly condemned, without one *profeſſed* advocate to plead its cauſe. And yet, how inconſiſtent and unaccountable ſo-

ever

ever it may ſeem, it is more generally practiſed, in ſome view or other of it, than vices that are not half ſo infamous and *ſhocking* to the mind. The reaſon of which I apprehend to be this: "That "the charge of *ingratitude* is, often-"times, not capable of *clear* and *full* "proof, becauſe that depends on innu-"merable circumſtances and *ſecret* tran-"ſactions, which cannot be thoroughly "*known* nor diſtinctly *ſpecified*; upon "which account, it is, *generally*, not "cogniſable by human laws: So that "men eſcape that *puniſhment*, and in a "great meaſure that *ſhame* and *ignominy*, "which, as it can be fixed with more *cer-*"*tainty*, follows likewiſe more *univer-*"*ſally*, on committing other acts of in-"juſtice." Beſides they are apt in nothing ſo much, as with reſpect to *particular inſtances* of ingratitude, to impoſe upon themſelves. The *groſſer* caſes, in which *direct* abuſe and indignity are offered to a benefactor, are freely exclaimed againſt; but ſuch as are leſs *flagrant*, either paſs without cenſure becauſe they are *common*, or for want of *reflection* are not

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not duly attended to. I ſhall therefore juſt mention a few examples of this vice, which appear to be the moſt *prevailing*; and then ſhew, briefly, that it is a heinous degree of wickedneſs, which argues a thoroughly corrupted and profligate mind, and is attended with moſt fatal conſequences.

IN the *firſt* place, That man may be juſtly charged with *ingratitude*, who refuſes, on all proper occaſions, to *acknowledge* the kindneſs he has received to the honour of his benefactor. This is the *leaſt return* that can be made for offices of generoſity and compaſſion; and whoever declines it deprives them of their *natural juſt reward* the *reſpect* of mankind; and would, if poſſible, *efface* all *remembrance* of them. "To be *ſhy* of "owning an obligation argues an *ignorant*, "*conceited*, *baſe* ſpirit, that aims at *independency*, and would fain be thought to be "*ſelf-ſufficient*; though it be obvious to "all, that man by the very frame of his "nature is *frail* and *impotent*, and muſt "in innumerable reſpects, without the "friendly interpoſition of others, be *helpleſs*

"and

" and *miſerable.*" A perſon of an *ingenuous* temper, therefore, conſiders it as no more *a diſgrace* to him to be indebted to his fellow-creatures, for relieving his cares and aſſiſting his imbecillity, than it is to be under a neceſſity of ſatisfying the appetites of hunger and thirſt, and taking in animal or vegetable nouriſhment for the ſupport of life. On the contrary, he thankfully adores the *wiſdom* of *providence* in ordaining the *mutual dependencies*, that there are amongſt mankind, as they are the moſt powerful *motive* imaginable to univerſal love and charity; and is always ready to acknowledge the benefits which he has received, for the *encouragement* of good and beneficent actions. SERM. III.

AND if it be ungrateful not to *own* an obligation, we muſt deſerve the ſame bad character, if we endeavour, by any means, to *leſſen* it. This may be done various ways: — By imputing it to *wrong principles*, to a deſire of popularity, and the like; by inſinuating that our benefactor did not deſign to do *us* good, ſo much as to ſerve *himſelf*, and, in the *oſtentation* of his beneficence, acted only from *ſelfiſhneſs*;

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neſs; that the ſervice he did us was not the effect of *a charitable diſpoſition*, but extorted from him by *importunity*, and the *influence* of thoſe whom he could not *in prudence* offend; that it was but a *common* favour that *any* man would do for another, and which was performed without *difficulty* or *expence*. — Thus will ungrateful ſuſpicions *tarniſh* the beſt actions, and give them ſuch an invidious turn as ſhall derogate greatly from their *merit*. This ſpecies of ingratitude proceeds from the ſame ſource as the former, from a ſtiff inflexible *pride* that cannot ſubmit to acknowledge an obligation, and therefore induſtriouſly and maliciouſly *detracts* from it; from *envy* at ſuperior goodneſs, that repines till it be blaſted, and its luſtre obſcured; and from a malignant cankered heart, that does all its *ſeeming* ſpecious offices of generoſity from low and vile motives, and is, therefore, diſpoſed to aſcribe to others the ſame *iniquity* and *baſeneſs* of temper, which it feels in itſelf.

AGAIN, "a man may return the ſervices done him in *kind*, and yet be ungrateful." If he confines himſelf to a ſtrict

ſtrict retaliation, to juſt the ſame *inſtances* and *degrees* of help, he may, in the opinion of the world, diſcharge the debt of *juſtice*, but be ſhamefully defective in point of *gratitude*. — " For perhaps the " perſon, who aſſiſted me, was one from " whom I could have no *claim*, or *juſt* " *expectation*, of particular friendſhip; " and can I think him ſufficiently paid " for a *free unmerited* act of kindneſs " by doing him *no favour* at all, and on- " ly returning what he had a right to in- " ſiſt upon as his *due?*" — Or elſe the ſervice he has done me might, in proportion to his circumſtances, be exceedingly *generous* and *noble*; my performing the ſame for him and going *no farther*, if my condition be much more eaſy and plentiful, may be nigardly and penurious *charity* even to a ſtranger; but however that be, to ſuch a benefactor it is ſo far from being a *proper exerciſe* of *gratitude*, that it *falls ſhort* of common equity. — Or finally the relief which he afforded me might be *critical*, in ſome ſpecial exigence and ſeaſon of diſtreſs that threatned the ruin of my family, or, at leaſt, the involv-

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involving it in next to inextricable difficulties. If, therefore, when his affairs are embarraſſed, and he requires a much *larger* ſuccour, than my neceſſities demanded, to redeem him from want and miſery, I am *unaffected* by his deplorable circumſtances, and content myſelf with rendring back the very *ſame proportion* of help which I received from him, I may do him *no* ſervice who did me the greateſt; and, where there is a capacity of being more generous without *any conſiderable* inconvenience to myſelf, this muſt certainly argue a very *inſenſible* and *barbarous* diſpoſition. 'There are ſome *ſingle favours* ſo gracefully and obligingly beſtowed, ſo well-timed and adapted to particular caſes, and ſo vaſtly important in their conſequences, that they cannot be *fully* requited but by the affection and *devoted friendſhip* of a whole life.'

IN the *laſt* place, ingratitude may be ſhewn even in *reſenting* injuries done by a benefactor. For the offence may be the reſult of *ſudden paſſion*, and ſhould therefore be gently overlook'd; the ſervice he did us might proceed from an *eſtabliſhed*

habit of *goodneſs* and a real concern for our welfare, and therefore ought never to be forgotten: Or elſe the benefits we have received may be ſo *many*, or ſo *valuable*, as ought to cancel and obliterate a great number of leſſer injuries. And, in both theſe caſes, the ſame reſentment that might be *lawful* on common occaſions, muſt be highly indecent and inexcuſeable. SERM III.

AND, now, it will eaſily be made to appear that ingratitude is ſo monſtrous a vice, ſo foul a ſtain upon humanity, that it loudly calls for our utmoſt horror and deteſtation. — To render evil for evil merely from a motive of *private* revenge, or, in other words, to be pleaſed with the ſufferings of our fellow-creatures only becauſe they have done us wrong, and without any regard to the *publick good*, is ſavage and unnatural. It muſt be a *more* aggravated crime to injure thoſe who have never *offended* us; becauſe this is cruelty without any *provocation*. Surely, then, we cannot conceive how any reaſonable creature can be more depraved, or arrive at a more diabolical exceſs of wickedneſs,

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than when it returns *evil* for good, *abuſes*, *calumny*, and *injuſtice* for friendſhip, protection, and acts of charity. This is not only being malicious *without a temptation*, but *againſt* the ſtrongeſt *reaſons* to the contrary; and conſequently argues, that we have, in a great meaſure, rooted out all our *humane* and *benevolent* affections. — Again acknowledgment, reſpect, and returns of kindneſs to a benefactor are a debt of *equity*, and therefore ingratitude muſt be a vile mixture of injuſtice and inhumanity in the *extreme* of both; a compound, which includes in it the *ſeeds* of all the blackeſt enormities that were ever committed. — This vice is likewiſe inconſiſtent with the exerciſe of *every* ſocial virtue. The ungrateful man will doubtleſs cheat and defraud his neighbour, and practiſe any other villany, when he thinks it to be for his *intereſt*, and that he may do it without being *diſcovered*: — For what ſhould *reſtrain* him? — He feels *no remorſe* for an offence of uncommon malignity, and it is not to be imagined, that he will be ſo *abſurdly ſqueamiſh* as to ſtick at leſſer immoralities. It cannot be expected

pected unleſs it be from a principle of SERM.
ſelf-love (which will but ſeldom operate III.
this way) it cannot, I ſay, be expected,
that he will do good to thoſe who never
obliged him when he uſes his *benefactors*
ill. There can no *friendſhip* be maintained
with the ungrateful, who repay the moſt
conſiderable ſervices with indifference
and contempt: And ſhould this crime
generally prevail, it muſt be an effectual
diſcouragement to kind and compaſſionate
offices among mankind, and have a direct
tendency, in the end, to deſtroy *public be-*
nevolence altogether. For there are few
but would be weary of doing good, if
they met with none but *ungrateful* re-
turns; the *ardor* of their charity would
by degrees abate; *mutual aſſiſtances* muſt
be bargained for, as is now the caſe in
matters of private *right* and *property*:
" And there could be but little of that *of-*
" *ficious* goodneſs, that open communica-
" tive *unſolicited* benevolence, which
" *ſearches* for objects on which to exert
" itſelf, *prevents* the complaints of the
" miſerable, and is, in ſhort, the *ſpring*

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" of the moſt *deſireable* conveniencies and " comforts of human life."

ADD to all this, that ingratitude to our fellow-creatures and to the infinite Creator are *inſeparably* connected, and muſt neceſſarily go together. " He that " is unjuſt to *one* perſon will, in the o- " pinion of the whole world, act a mere " ſolemn farce, if he pretends *Conſcience* " for the exerciſe of ſtrict juſtice to *ano-* " *ther*. His Conſcience can be only *in-* " *tereſt*, or the *neceſſity* of his affairs that " obliges him to be honeſt. If he im- " poſes on *ſtrangers* who place a confi- " dence in him, no man will believe him " when he profeſſes, from a principle of " *morality*, to be either true to his *friend*, " or faithful to his *prince*. And 'tis an " equal contradiction to ſuppoſe, that he " who is ungrateful to *men* can be grate- " ful to his *God*." So that this abomi- nable vice eradicates all ſenſe of *piety*, and, together with that (as has been be- fore obſerved) deſtroys the very ſeeds of every *ſocial* virtue.

SHOULD

SHOULD it be aſked, how it comes to paſs that a crime, ſo full of baſeneſs and guilt, is not expreſſly condemned by the *Chriſtian* religion; the anſwer is natural, that the deformity and monſtrous qualities of it, are ſo plain to the *firſt* reflections of mankind, ſo univerſally allowed and highly reſented, that there is no need of its being *diſtinctly ſpecified* in any ſcheme of morals: — "For it can never be a ſin of ignorance." — But to this we may add, that our Saviour has expreſſly told us, that even the *Publicans*, who are repreſented as ſome of the moſt *notorious* ſinners in his time, *loved thoſe that loved them, and did good to thoſe from whom they received good*; ſtrongly intimating, that ingratitude *ſhocks* the temper of ſome of the worſt of men, and is therefore *vice* in its moſt *unnatural* exceſs. And if the *unrighteous* in general, by the wiſe conſtitution of the goſpel, ſhall not *inherit the kingdom of God*, the argument muſt hold, with much greater force, againſt admitting the *ungrateful* into that glorious ſtate; in which exerciſes of *love* and *chearful obedience* to the Deity,

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and *benevolence* and *good-will* towards the bleſſed inhabitants, refined from all alloys of pride, envy, inſolence and ill-nature, will not only be our conſtant *employment*, but the principal *ingredient* in our happineſs.

IN the *laſt* place, it is one of the moſt remarkable parts of *Joſeph*'s hiſtory, that the *loweſt ſcene* of his diſgrace, the moſt *melancholy*, and, to human probability, *deſperate* ſtate of his affairs was the means of his *advancement* to eminent dignity in *Pharoah*'s court, and to be the firſt miniſter in his kingdom. From whence we are led to reflect on the *wiſdom* of providence in ſo framing the condition of human life, "that the events of things are "unknown to us." Such a diſpoſition, in a ſtate liable to infinite *viciſſitudes*, is followed with great advantages, whereas a clear foreſight of the *whole* iſſue and reſult of things, and of every ſcene through which we are to paſs, would be attended with innumerable inconveniencies, and have conſequences very fatal to *religion*, and to the *peace* of our own minds. If

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a man, for inſtance, could *certainly* ſay in his flouriſhing circumſtances, as *David* did *preſumptuouſly*, that he ſhould *never be moved*, but enjoy an uninterrupted courſe of affluence and worldly honour, he would probably be elate with *pride*, and give larger ſcope to his *luxury*: While the *uncertainty* of the higheſt ſtations, and the variety of unforeſeen accidents that may *reverſe* his fortune, *checks* the inſolence of proſperity, and *ſuppreſſes* vain imaginations; and is a perpetual *incentive* to frugality, moderation, and other ſocial virtues. On the other hand, were he ſure that his miſeries were remedileſs, and the difficulties in which he is involved *inſuperable*, the gloomy proſpect would quite *diſpirit* him, enfeeble his *reſolution*, indiſpoſe him for the duties of *religion*, and a regular diſcharge of the *common offices* of life. In *many* caſes, it is very probable, it would impair the *health* and diſorder the *underſtanding*, as it muſt, in *all*, be a moſt effectual bar to *induſtry*, *arts*, and *ingenuity*. But as the world is now governed, and we ſee only the *paſt* SERM. III.

SERM. III. and *preſent*, but not the chain of events that are *before* us, the moſt afflicted may ſupport themſelves with the hope of better times to come; and this muſt be a conſiderable relief to their cares, and keep them from ſinking under the weight of their ſufferings, which would otherwiſe be grievous indeed, and intolerable. In ſuch a ſituation, where ſo great a part of the ſcene is wrapt up in *darkneſs*, and what is *concealed* from us may be ſo often varied, our duty lies plain and obvious to every capacity: And the ſum of it is, "that we take care that riches, "eaſe and plenty do not make us *luxuri-* "*ous* and *diſſolute*, nor *high-minded* and "*arrogant*; nor adverſity, *irreſolute* and "*deſponding*; but that we maintain a "conſtant *equanimity* and *ſteadineſs* of "temper, an *unruffled* patient ſpirit, and "a humble calm reſignation to provi- "dence:" Firmly believing that amidſt the preſent *ſeeming* confuſions, and ſtrange revolutions that happen in human affairs, all is conducted with unerring wiſdom, and by invariable rules of righ-

teouſneſs and goodneſs; and directing our views *forward*, with delight and thankfulneſs, to the world of perfect peace and bliſs unchangeable, in which there ſhall be *no more ſorrow, nor pain, nor death*, but we ſhall be exalted to a higher rank of exiſtence, and be made like *unto the Angels of God*. SERM. III.

SER-

SERMON IV.

Of the natural relation of men to God, and their common tie to each other.

ACTS xvii. 28.

—*For we are alſo his offſpring.*

THERE is no thought that deſcribes human nature more *honourably*, or repreſents the original and unchangeable relation, which mankind ſtand in to the ſupreme Being, in a more *pleaſing* and *agreeable* light, than that ſuggeſted in the text. The thought itſelf is extremely juſt

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juſt and natural, one of the *firſt* and moſt *univerſal* dictates of reaſon; which all the ſuperſtitions and prejudices, that ever prevailed in the world, have not been able to *efface*. And as it ſprings from genuine and uncorrupted nature, it muſt undeniably be a proper and *wiſe* reflection; and, withal, nothing can be of greater importance "to teach us the right knowledge "of our *Maker*, of our *fellow-creatures*, "of *ourſelves*," and point out the various diſpoſitions and duties that become us. For all which reaſons, which I ſhall have occaſion in what follows to explain more at large, St. *Paul*, in his ſpeech to the men of *Athens*, did not think it any diſparagement to his *Apoſtolic* authority to adopt this *noble* maxim of a *Greek Heathen* poet, and eſtabliſh it as a *Chriſtian* doctrine, *viz.* that *we are* all *the offſpring* of God. — A clear and unconteſtable proof this, that the goſpel is *built upon*, and therefore could never be intended to *diſcredit*, the diſcoveries made by the light of nature; and, withal a remarkable inſtance of the Apoſtle's excellent *addreſs*, who, by arguing with *Pagans*

gans on principles *allowed* by the wiſeſt among themſelves, took the ſureſt method to ſooth and allay their prejudices, to inſinuate truth with the greater eaſe, and ſecure to it its juſt force and energy. SERM. IV.

IT is very evident, that we are declared, in the text, to be *the offspring of God* by *nature*. "It is from our being his "*creatures*, that we derive the character "of being his *children* and his *family*." — May it then be fitly ſaid of *all* the creatures of God that they are alſo *his offſpring?* I anſwer "that a title may be "*ſo far* founded in *creation*, that that "may be neceſſary to give *a right* to it, "and yet it may not have its *ſole* foundation *there:* Or, in other words, it may "properly belong to *a certain order* of "creatures, but not to *all* creatures without *diſtinction*." And agreeably hereto, both *revelation* and the voice of *reaſon* concur, in *appropiating* this exalted and honourable character to *rational* Beings; who are not only the *workmanſhip* of the Deity, but *partake* of his *nature*, and bear a *peculiar reſemblance* of him in his moſt excellent *communicable* attributes.

To

SERM. IV. To repreſent mere *material* and *inſenſible* beings as the offſpring, though they are the *creatures*, of the living God, of that *active* and *vital* Spirit who animates the univerſe, muſt appear at firſt ſight to be *harſh* and *unnatural*. And to deſcribe *thoſe* as the offſpring of *a pure ſpirit*, poſſeſt of perfect and infinite *intelligence*, who enjoy only *animal* life, and are guided by no higher principles than *appetite* and *inſtinct*, muſt at leaſt carry with it the face of great *impropriety*, and be a very *bold* and *unuſual* figure of ſpeech. — But mankind have a diſtinguiſhed and peculiar *claim*. "Their ſouls are a kind "of *emanation* from the ſpiritual nature "of the Deity; their reaſon is *a ray* of "his intelligence; and the moral powers, "with which they are endued, are *gene-* "*rated*, as it were, from his moral excel- "lencies; their *kind*, *benevolent* and *com-* "*paſſionate* diſpoſitions from his eſſential "and abſolute goodneſs." From whence we form the *general concluſions*, which are the *foundation* of all our juſt reflections and reaſonings upon this ſubject: *viz.* That we are the *offspring* of God with

with reſpect to the frame and conſtitution of our *minds*, on account of the *ſpirit* within us, to which the *inſpiration of the Almighty has given underſtanding*, and of our more *ſublime faculties*; not as we are ſubject to animal ſenſations and paſſions, but as intelligent and moral creatures. And, of conſequence, that we can never ſupport, and much leſs diſplay in its full glory, the *dignity* of our peculiar relation to God as our *Father*, by any purſuits that reſpect merely the *lower* and *brutal* part of our frame; not by ſtriving to excel in luxury, and outſhine one another in the ſplendor of dreſs and equipage, and the tinſel pomp of worldly grandeur; but only by cultivating our *rational* powers, and improving in thoſe *amiable moral* habits which will really *enoble* our nature, and are the *chief excellence* in the character of that great Being, from whom we *claim* to be deſcended. And this leads me to ſhew the various and eminent *uſes* that may be ſerved, by making the principle, on which I am now diſcourſing, *intimate* and *habitual* to the mind: From whence it will appear, "that it is the ſupport of

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"*rational*

SERM. IV. "*rational* religion, the cement of *ſocial* "virtue, the ſource of *refined* and *gene-* "*rous* ſentiments, and a conſtant ſpur to "*great* and *laudable* purſuits."

IN the FIRST place, the thought ſuggeſted in the text may be conſidered as *a principle* of the utmoſt importance, to *direct* all our *inquiries* and *reaſonings* concerning the Divine providence and government; and to *aſſiſt* us both in forming *right general* notions of religion, and in explaining the *doctrines* of revelation. That mankind are the *offspring* of God neceſſarily implies in it, "that God is "the *Father* of mankind;" who has an unalienable *right* to this title, and to all the *powers* and *honours* reſulting from it, founded in *nature*, and in eternal laws of *equity*. And it muſt belong to him in an appropriate and *eminent* ſenſe, as he is not a ſecondary, but the firſt *efficient*, cauſe; not merely the *inſtrument* by which exiſtence is communicated, but the *original ſpring* of life and activity, the *Author* of human nature and all its faculties. So that as it may juſtly be affirmed that he is the *only ſource* of being, and the

the *ſole monarch* of the world; it must alſo be allowed, if we confine ourſelves to ſtrict truth and propriety, that *he alone* is the *Father* of mankind: "There being but *one Father* of the "whole rational and moral creation, in "exactly the ſame ſenſe as there is but "*one God* and *one Governor*." SERM. IV.

BUT we muſt be extremely careful, while we aſcribe the appellation of a *Father* to the infinite and all-perfect Deity, that our ideas be *exalted* and *refined*; "and not ſuffer our apprehenſions con-"cerning this his *relative* character to "*ſhade*, or *ſtain*, the glories of his *moral* "character:" We muſt ſtill *know*, and *remember*, that he is *God*, i. e. a Being poſſeſſed of *all poſſible* perfections and excellencies. It is neceſſary, therefore, that we conſider him as the *Father* of mankind *ſupreme* and *uncontroulable* in *power*, able to *provide* for the neceſſities of all his children, to *puniſh* the obſtinate and incorrigible, and *advance* filial reverence and piety to the higheſt ſtations of dignity and happineſs: — As the *Father* of man-

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kind *infinite* in *wiſdom*, incapable of *blind* and *miſguided* affections, of unreaſonable *fondneſs*, *prejudice*, or *partiality*; but in *all* his operations, in *all* the diſtributions of his favour and munificence, ſteadily directed by *one* principle, *viz.* the *unchanging rule* of right reaſon: — Again, as the *Father* of mankind *unconfin'd* and *immutable*, with reſpect to his *goodneſs*, condeſcending, generous and compaſſionate, beyond the *conception* of a finite underſtanding; in whoſe nature, oppreſſion, revenge, cruelty, peeviſhneſs, or the leaſt malignity of temper, can find *no place*: And, finally, whoſe *abſolute* moral rectitude renders it altogether as impoſſible for him, by an improper *lenity*, to indulge and cheriſh vice, and render it more headſtrong and inſolent; as it is contrary to his eſſential attributes to govern with an arbitrary inflexible *rigor*, or purſue any ſchemes that are *neceſſarily* inconſiſtent with the welfare and felicity of his creatures.

THE moral government of God is the *ground* of all religion, and, to a diſcerning

honeſt well-regulated mind, it is alſo the *nobleſt* and moſt *engaging* ſubject of contemplation. "Virtue, if bereft of this, "would loſe its moſt ſubſtantial *prop*, "and be too eaſily overborne by *paſſion* "and *ſelf-intereſt*. Having nothing to "*defend* it but its own intrinſick beauty "and worth, (which are found, in innumerable caſes, inſufficient to *repel* "injury and violence) and enjoying no "longer that inward *calm reſignation*, "that *ardor* and *undaunted ſpirit*, which "the *preſence* and *ſuperintending care* of "an all powerful wiſe and friendly Deity "continually inſpire; it will be apt to "decline and languiſh, and *ſink* under "the weight of *oppreſſion*." And yet that ſupreme *moral rule*, without which, the *beſt part* of the univerſe would be in danger of falling into the utmoſt diſorder and confuſion, and on which, the *effectual enforcement* and *ſupport* of righteouſneſs and integrity, and the *happineſs* of all the truly wiſe and good immediately depend; the *ſupreme moral rule* has, I ſay, been ſo abſurdly and injudiciouſly repreſented, as in

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fact to *diſcourage* virtue, and convert, what ſhould have been a *rational, chearful, generous* piety, into a *ſullen, diſpirited, ſervile* ſuperſtition; and what is, in itſelf, formidable only to the *worſt* of men has proved a diſconſolate reflection, and an object of terror, to *ſome* of the beſt: And thus their uprightneſs and probity have ſuffer'd *great wrong*, through the weakneſs of their judgment. And from whence has this proceeded? "From re-
" preſenting the government of God as
" capricious and partial, rigorous and op-
" preſſive; and not deſcribing it, in the
" manner in which it *ought* to be deſcrib-
" ed, as a mild, propitious, *paternal* go-
" vernment: At the thought of which
" rightly digeſted, and impreſſed upon the
" mind, all the groundleſs *gloomy ſuſpi-*
" *cions*, all the *extravagant frights* and
" *horrors* of ſuperſtition will naturally
" *vaniſh*."

FOR if we conſider the *laws* of God as laws given by a *Father* to his *children* (taking it only granted, that he is not *a hard unnatural* Father) what are the *con-*

ſequences, which every rational being might immediately draw from hence? Why, in the *firſt* place, that theſe laws are all *righteous* and *equitable*, proportion'd to our *abilities*, and adapted to our *ſtate* and *circumſtances*; and, moreover, that they are *gracious* and *beneficent* laws, which are either abſolutely neceſſary to *preſerve*, or at leaſt have a manifeſt ſubſerviency to *eſtabliſh* and *advance*, that moral rectitude and order, which are the chief excellence and honour of human nature, and the ſource of its happineſs. Again, the condeſcenſion and goodneſs, that are inſeparable from God's *paternal* character, directly lead to theſe concluſions: — That he conſiders our *frame*, is diſpoſed to make *favourable* allowances for the darkneſs and confuſion of our underſtandings, for *conſtitutional* frailty and ſtrength of paſſion, and tenderly commiſerates our *involuntary* errors. — That even the *wilful* diſorders and irregularities of his *children* are not an *abſolute* and *eternal* bar to the obtaining his favour; but that he is ready to ſhew *mercy* even to the

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rebellious and disobedient, upon their sincere repentance and reformation. — That the *whole* administration and conduct of his providence is intended for their *good*: — That as *all* mankind are *his offspring*, he desires the *happiness* of *all*; and is ever *prompted*, by his unbounded and *universal* goodness to afford them *those assistances*, which are necessary to advance the perfection of their natures, to confirm good resolutions, and carry them on to maturity, that *wisdom's ways* may be found, by experience, to be *ways* of *pleasantness*, and *her paths peace*: *For if ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your Children; how much more shall* your *heavenly* FATHER *give the holy spirit to them that ask him?* And in these words of our blessed Saviour, there are two things very observable. — The one is, that he plainly supposes the doctrine of *Divine assistances* to have its foundation *in the nature of things*; and that it is a point which might be argued, with a high degree of *probability*, even from *common principles* of *reason*. For, "*wherever* God *may* be known

Luke xi. 13.

" as the Creator and *Father* of mankind, SERM.
" that is, indeed, *every where*, and even IV.
" in the moſt *rude* and *unpoliſh'd* nations;
" *wherever* the *relation* of father *ſubſiſts*,
" and the *ſenſe* of paternal duty and af-
" fection is not utterly *extinguiſh'd*;"
the ſame *general concluſion* may be form'd, as our Lord has ſo forcibly inculcated: *viz.* that God is always ready, ſo far as is conſiſtent with the *rectitude* of his nature, and with the *wiſdom* and *honour* of his government, to aid and encourage all his rational offspring in the neceſſary work of correcting their errors, and in the purſuit of virtue and happineſs. — The other remark is this, that the *whole* of the argument, as it here ſtands, is built on this *general maxim*, that, in the relation of *Father* of mankind, God muſt, of neceſſity, vaſtly *exceed*, with reſpect to every inſtance of *rational* and *wiſe* affection, the *beſt* and moſt *perfect* of earthly parents: And, of conſequence, our Lord's obſervation ſtrengthens and confirms *every inference*, that I have hitherto drawn from God's *paternal* character. I ſhall

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only add that this thought, that we are *the offspring* of God, naturally ſuggeſts to us what is the true *principle* of virtue, the true *ſpring* of our obedience and ſubmiſſion to the Deity; "that it ought not to "proceed from *compulſion* and *terror*, "like the obedience of *ſlaves* to a *tyrant*, "but from *ingenuity* and *gratitude*, from "*filial love* and *veneration*; not as if it "was *a taſk* exacted by a *moroſe* and *evil* "Being, whom we *dreaded*, and, at the "ſame time, *abhorr'd*, but as *a voluntary homage* directed wholly by *reaſon*, "and in which *inclination* and *duty* both "concur." Thus religion appears to be entirely rational with reſpect to its *principles*, and amiable and pleaſant in the *practice*; in a word, to be *honourable* to God, and *friendly* to men.

BUT if any want *fuller* ſatisfaction that all, which I have now advanced, is juſtly deduced from the principle aſſerted in the text, *that we are the offspring* of God; let them *reverſe* the ſcene, and ſee in what light it will then appear. — Can the *Father* of mankind *enjoin* things that

are

are *impracticable*, or *puniſh* any one for what it was not in *his power* to avoid? Can the *Father* of mankind *impoſe unneceſſary* burdens on his children, and, for the diſplay of his ſovereign power, *enact hurtful*, or even *unprofitable uſeleſs* laws? Can the *Father* of mankind be *ſtern* and *inexorable*, *ſevere* to *infirmities* of *nature*, to *involuntary* and *lamented* imperfections? Can the *Father* of mankind have *no mercy* for *penitents?* Can God be the *Father* of *all* mankind, and yet not *good*, not *propitious*, to *all?* Can he bring *children* into being on purpoſe to make them *miſerable*, abſolutely, finally, and irremediably miſerable? "What then "does the appellation of FATHER ſigni- "fy, when it has no more of *indulgence* "or *grace* in it, than that of *implacable* "*enemy*, *tormentor*, and *executioner?*" Let me add to all this, that thoſe ſeem to have loſt *all ſenſe* of God as the *Father* of mankind, "who *tremble* at the thought "of his preſence and inſpection, as if he "noted their conduct with the *ſeverity* "of an *inquiſitor*; and *watched*, as it "were,

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" were, to *ſpy out* evidence againſt them
" that, though they are in the main *ſin-*
" *cere*, they are not *perfect*; with no
" other view but to be able to ſatisfy
" *ſtern rigid juſtice*, without at all con-
" ſulting *mercy*, that he does *no wrong*
" in puniſhing."

AND as a proper reflection, on our being *the offſpring* of God, directly inſpires all that affectionate and humble *piety*, which is due to the Deity himſelf as the *common Father* of mankind; it has alſo a natural tendency to produce, and cultivate all that *benevolence* and *mercy*, that mutual and tender *ſympathy*, which we owe one to another. If God be the *Father* of us *all*, we *all* are *brethren*. Our *obligation* therefore, to diſcharge the duties which I have now mentioned, is as obvious to the very loweſt capacity, as is the *relation* in which we ſtand to the reſt of mankind. And, conſequently, if we are only *inſenſible* of the diſtreſſes of thoſe, to whom we are moſt *nearly allied* by ties of blood and common humanity, and much more if we *aggravate* their miſe-

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ries by oppreſſion and injuſtice; our con- SERM.
duct muſt be to the laſt degree *vile* and IV.
unnatural. Beſides, by not cheriſhing in
our minds ſentiments of benevolence and
mercy, we treat the *Father* of the uni-
verſe with *contempt* and *indignity.* We
oppoſe, we *reproach*, nay we, in a man-
ner, *inſult* the pattern which he has ſet
before us, of *diffuſive* and *unlimited* good-
neſs, if we confine our regard or friend-
ſhip to *one part* of the ſpecies, and neg-
lect *all the reſt*, who are *equally* his chil-
dren; and bear, perhaps, as *ſtrong im-
preſſions* in their rational and moral pow-
ers, as we ourſelves can boaſt of, of his
excellent, his divine, *image.*

" BROTHERHOOD and *amity*, *bro-*
" *therhood* and *cordial friendſhip*, *bro-*
" *therhood* and *community* of *intereſt*,
" *brotherhood* and an *indulgent condeſcend-*
" *ing* temper, together with a *generous*
" *concern* for each others welfare, are
" very nearly *coincident* ideas; becauſe
" in the reaſon of things they neither *are*
" nor *can* be ſeparated." When, there-
fore, all mankind *love* as brethren, they

ſupport

SERM. IV. ſupport that character with *propriety* and *honour*. But when about matters of *remote* concern, in which their *general relation* is not at all intereſted, they ſplit into factions, and purſue oppoſite views, with *eſtranged* and *alienated* affections; *hateful*, and *hating one another*: This ſhocks our very *firſt* reflections as a ſcandal to *human nature*, and infinitely diſgraceful to *all religion*. "But on the "contrary, as in the *natural* world, it "ſtrikes us with an agreeable ſurprize "and pleaſure, to ſee the *various effects* "of divine wiſdom and omnipotence "*connected* in their uſe, and *conſpiring* "jointly to one grand deſign, by the in-"fluence and force of *neceſſary* laws; it "muſt appear at leaſt equally *beautiful* "to every mind that is not either blind-"ed, or prodigiouſly depraved, to find "the vaſtly *different humours*, *charact-*"*ers*, and particular *intereſts* of *moral* "agents, *voluntarily* directed to the *uni-*"*verſal good*. When a ſedate and un-"diſturbed benevolence and harmony is "*fixed* and *eſtabliſhed* in the *beſt* and *no-*

"*bleſt*

" *bleſt* part of the creation; this is an " object, that every wiſe and good man, " muſt, one would think, ſurvey with a " *ſenſible* and *ſtrong* complacency, and " God himſelf with *approbation* and *calm* " delight."

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I SHALL only add, in the *laſt* place, that a juſt notion of this important truth, that God is our *Father*, naturally tends to inſpire a ſtrong *ſenſe* of *our own honour*, a *contempt* of *mean* compliances and *irregular* exceſſes; joined with an *ardent emulation* to *excel* in every thing that is praiſe-worthy and amiable, and *raiſe* our virtues to the higheſt pitch of purity and perfection. — When any one purſues the contrary courſe, to what I have now recommended, he evidently *wanders* from the eternal *rule* of right, from *nature*, and the *law* of his creation; he follows error *quite* habited and adorned with *ſpurious* decorations; which, thus *diſguiſed*, throws a miſt before the *moral ſenſe*, and entertains the *fancy* with groundleſs hopes and ſplendid amuſing proſpects, but muſt of neceſſity *terminate*

in

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in remorſe and confuſion. " He may be " a perſon of ſome *account*, nay, perhaps, of *eminence* and *diſtinction*, among thoſe whoſe imagination is equally *vitiated*, and who are, jointly with himſelf, the *votaries* of vanity and libertiniſm; but entirely forſakes the *only path* that can lead to true dignity: He may be a *lively*, *pert*, *unmeaning*, *unanxious* animal; but muſt be an *unhappy* reaſonable creature, and a *degenerate* child of God." Let us demonſtrate, then, that we are truly *wiſe*, by improving in ourſelves, and others, the *lively* and *habitual* influence of this principle that we are of *divine extraction*. Let us aſſert and vindicate the honour of our nature. Let us *diſdain* to be inſlaved to appetite, the groſſer and baſer part of it. Let it be our *ultimate ambition*, in proportion to the *extent* and *ſcope* of our faculties, *to be perfect, as our Father who is in heaven is perfect*. Then may we expect, in conformity to the example of Jeſus Chriſt, who is ſtiled *the firſt-born among many brethren*, to *aſcend*

to his *Father and* our *Father*, *to* his *God* SERM.
and our *God*; there, in manſions of un- IV.
clouded light and joy ineffable, to be
crowned with *tranſcendent* rewards and
honours. To this purpoſe are the words
of St. *John*, with which I ſhall conclude
this diſcourſe: *Beloved, now are we the* 1 John ii.
ſons of God, and it doth not yet appear 2, 3.
what we ſhall be; but we know, that
when he ſhall appear, we ſhall be like him:
For we ſhall ſee him as he is: And every
man, that hath this hope in him, purifieth
himſelf, even as he is pure.

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SERMON V.

Of Murder, and the Cuſtoms and Vices leading to it.

EXODUS xx. 13.

Thou ſhalt not kill.

THESE words are much better rendred in an older tranſlation of the Bible thus: — *Thou ſhalt do no murder*. For all *killing*, or taking away the life of a man, is not unjuſtifiable; and therefore it could never be repreſented as a crime, *univerſally*, by any commonly wiſe and equitable, and much leſs by *a divine* law; but *murder* is abſolutely prohibited. The

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latter reading, therefore, clearly expreſſes the *determinate* and *compleat* ſenſe of this precept; and it is hard to account how it came to be *exchanged* for another, that can give us *no* juſt notion of the offence forbidden. For killing *may* in various caſes, but murder *never can*, in any poſſible ſituation or moſt *extreme exigence* of human affairs, be *innocent*; the one is promiſcuouſly and indifferently uſed to denote both a *good* and a *bad* action, the other is always a term of *guilt*, which is inſeparable from the idea affixed to it.

IT is indeed a crime ſo entirely *inhuman*, ſo *foul*, ſo *black*, ſo *monſtrous*, that at the bare mention of it, human nature is apt to be thrown into *diſorder*, and ſtruck with *horror*. It argues (eſpecially if it be *deliberately* and *coolly* perpetrated) a mind *averſe* to all ſentiments of goodneſs, and *hardned* in a vicious temper; a mind *malicious*, *fierce*, *daringly* and *inflexibly* wicked, and trampling under foot all the common ties of *nature* and *juſtice*. It was therefore moſt wiſely and righteouſly appointed, by a particular *poſitive* ſanction of the Almighty, that *murderers* ſhould

ſhould be puniſh'd with *death*; and this is plainly pointed out to us as what was *fit* to be obſerved, for a *perpetual* and *irreverſible* law and ordinance of juſtice, under *all forms* of human government. With which ſolemn determination, the *principles* and *impreſſions* of equity, *ſtill* ſubſiſting in the moſt ignorant and uncultivated parts of the world, do in the main correſpond. Men, in other reſpects extremely licentious and diſſolute in their morals, who make but little ſcruple of theft and robbery, and many lawleſs acts of *violence*, are ſhocked and terrified at the very *ſuggeſtion* of *a murder* — and, frequently, even *murderers* themſelves find that they are ſurrounded with *heart-corroding* and *never-ceaſing terrors*. Their *peace* of mind is irrecoverably loſt with their *innocence*. They experience a *deep* and *ſettled gloom*, which all their art, all their ſhifts and amuſements, can never diſſipate; and through which there paſſes not *one beam* of true and ſolid comfort. They are hourly diſquieted by *diſtractions* from within, and *fear*s of danger from without. *Darkneſs* and *ſolitude* ſtart and raiſe

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new horrors. And even in their dreams, the *guilty imagination* is often *reſtleſs* and *active* in tormenting itſelf, exhibiting *diſmal* and *unnatural* ſcenes of blood and cruelty, and haunted to ſuch a degree by *pale*, *melancholy*, *ghaſtly*, and *menacing* ſpectres, as has occaſioned *agonies* of dread and amazement; ſpectres ſo *ſtrongly* painted, and with ſuch *natural* and *lively* terror, that even the *waking ſenſe* has ſtill been inclin'd to believe them *real*. And the whole of what has been offer'd upon this head, evidently demonſtrates " the " ſtrong *checks*, which are provided in " *nature*, to reſtrain from ſuch barbari- " ties; how many *fences*, kindly *inter-* " *poſed*, muſt be broken down, before " we can arrive at this dreadful pitch of " total depravation; and the ſevere ven- " geance on account of it, which *nature* " itſelf, *God's miniſter*, is ſo conſtituted " as to be able to execute, in the preſent " life, not as *full* retribution; but only " as an unhappy *preſage* of thoſe more " *ample*, *laſting*, and *inexpreſſible* hor- " rors, into which the guilt of blood, " without a moſt bitter and exemplary " repen-

" repentance, will ſink the Soul here- SERM.
" after, when it has ſtood its trial before V.
" the tribunal of *impartial juſtice.*"

I HAVE endeavoured, in the beginning of this diſcourſe, to deſcribe the guilt, and conſequences, and puniſhment of murder in affecting and lively colours, that our *attention* may be the more cloſely engaged to what is intended to follow; and ſuch a *deteſtation* of it, and *dread* of its tremendous effects, may be fixed and rooted in our minds, as *no* temptation, in any *future* ſcene of life, ſhall ever be able to overcome. There are *none*, I would hope, in this Aſſembly, to whom this foul offence can be juſtly imputed even by their own *conſciences*, or by the *omniſcient* God from whom no ſecrets are hid; and *none*, perhaps, but who, if the leaſt diſtant intimation was given that it was poſſible for them ever to become ſo *degenerate*, would be ready to reply in a ſtrain ſomewhat like that of *Hazael* to the prophet *Elijah* — " *What, is thy*
" *ſervant a dog*, actuated by *furious bru-*
" *tal* inſtincts, and bereft of all the *kind*
" and *tender* feelings and affections of

SERM. V. "*humanity*, that he ſhould commit ſo "vile an enormity as this." But notwithſtanding this *generous* and, I make no doubt, *honeſt* reſentment of heart, which we experience to riſe within us, it cannot be at all amiſs to have our *horror*, upon particular occaſions, *afreſh* excited, and improved, if it may be, to a *ſtill* greater height; becauſe there have been examples of perſons, who thought themſelves compleatly, and almoſt *invincibly*, fortified againſt every temptation of this kind, that have been betrayed, and led on *gradually*, to ſuch an utter ſtupidity of mind with reſpect to all *moral ſenſe*, as not to *ſtick* at the ſhedding of innocent blood. And this, when it is properly adverted to, and *traced* regularly in its ſeveral *diſtinct ſtages* of progreſſion, will not appear to have any thing really marvellous and incomprehenſible in it, but to be the ſtated *courſe* of nature; "which "has *an order*, and for the moſt part an "*uniform train* of conſequences, in its "*perverſions* as well as in its *improve*-"*ments*, in its *crooked* and *irregular* as in "its ſtreight and even paths." For as

the *purſuit* of *good*, ſteadily maintained, naturally leads to the *perfection* of good; ſo vice, being in itſelf *extravagance*, muſt, the *farther* we proceed in it, be neceſſarily *greater* error and extravagance, and tend to *dangerous* extremes, and to the very *worſt* extremes. Thus we find ſcenes of *adulterous lewdneſs* cloſed with *blood*. Hence it is, that *furious*, *precipitate*, and *ungoverned paſſion* ſo frequently ends in *murder*: And that *luxury*, or the *pride* of *elegant* diſtinction and *ſplendid* appearance above our *juſt* rank and circumſtance, produces, firſt, *perplexity* and *diſtreſs* in our affairs; *that*, not being able to create juſt reflection as the means to *ſubdue* our pride, puts us upon *indirect courſes* to ſupply our neceſſities; our indirect courſes within the *ſhelter* of law failing, we muſt have *ſome other* reſource to ſupport our extravagance; we are then perhaps hurried on to attempt ſuch notorious and *violent invaſions* of our neighbours right, as all *wiſe* ſocieties muſt, from principles and motives of *ſelf-preſervation*, devote to *infamy* and a diſtinguiſhed *puniſhment*. — Should it *now* happen from our being SERM. V.

SERM. V. perſonally *known*, or from the danger of a public *alarm* and cloſe *purſuit* being raiſed, that the thought of *a murder* is ſuggeſted, what *ſecurity* have we againſt this unnatural crime? — "All which demonſtrates the undeniable *uſe* of preaching "ſometimes, on the *ſubject* of murder, "before *others* beſides *murderers*; be"cauſe while *exceſs* of *pleaſure* and *ex*"*ceſs* of *pride* and *paſſion* prevail, we "are by no means out of *danger*. It is "not the *mere reſolution* of an offender "that may be depended upon to *ſave* "him, when the *connection* of his *pre*"*ſent* vices with others *future* will, in "all probability, be *an overmatch* for "ſuch a reſolution."

OF this there have been moſt *fearful* examples within the experience of all ages. And of late years ſuch moſt execrable murders have been committed among ourſelves, as for the *deliberate* execution, the *ſteadineſs* and *unconcern* of the criminals, and the almoſt *incredible* circumſtances of *barbarity* attending them, ſcarce admit of a parallel; as if *cruelty* and a *ſavage* diſpoſition were gaining

ground

ground upon us, and we were more and more *loſt* to a *ſenſe* of benevolence and compaſſion. This is chiefly owing to the general decay of *virtue*, and contempt of *religion*, and want of ſerious *conſideration*, that are at preſent too viſible. But I believe it may be aſcribed likewiſe, in a great meaſure, to *another* cauſe, and that is, "the barbarity of our *public diverſions*; and the "delight which this nation ſeems to take, "above all others, in *ſpectacles* of inhumanity and terror." The being *entertained* with theſe *ſights* of blood, and the *dexterity* of *ſavage animals* (unjuſtly claiming the name of *men*) in abuſing, wounding, and maiming each other, has a natural tendency to drive *all* commiſeration and pity from the heart; and to raiſe and propagate the very *worſt ſpirit*, that can poſſibly take place in beings endued with rational powers, — "a Spirit "*ſedately*, and without *emotion*, cruel." They *familiarize* to us the *agonies* of human ſufferings, and ſome of the moſt *affecting* circumſtances, that can ever be ſuppoſed to happen in the moſt *horrid* mur- SERM. V. S 2

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murders. We are inured to behold all this without *a ſigh*, without *reluctance*, nay with *exultation* and *loud* applauſes. And is it poſſible for us, after this, to retain any thing of a *ſoft relenting* heart? While we allow ourſelves to *ſport* with the *pangs* and *miſeries* of one of our own ſpecies, can we look upon *his life* as ſacred? The *loſs* of a life, in theſe *worſe* than ſavage ſpectacles, we know ſtrikes but little; and the impreſſion, which it appears to make, has more of *formality* and the force of *cuſtom* in it, than of real *generous* and *tender feeling*. And can it then, upon any principles of reaſon, be imagined, that our *horror*, at the thought of taking away life, can proceed from notions of *equity*, and a ſincere *love* of mankind; or that it does not ariſe, almoſt entirely, from the reſtraint of *human laws*, and the fear of *civil puniſhments*; and, of conſequence, that it will *abate* in proportion as this our *fear* abates, and as we think that we have ground to believe that our deſigns are *ſecret*, and run no *riſque* of being diſcovered? — So that we may look upon

upon the *infamous* places, where theſe ſhocking and *unnatural* ſcenes are exhibited, "as the *haunt* and *ſchool* of the "murderer, and as having no tendency "to cultivate that *true valour*, which is "the diſtinction of the *nobleſt*, and ſhines "moſt illuſtriouſly in the *gentleſt* and "moſt compaſſionate ſpirits; but as cal-"culated only to *fix* upon us, what has "long been imputed to us by *foreigners* "as a *national* reproach, *viz.* that we "have more of *roughneſs* and *ferocity*, "than of *humanity* and *tenderneſs* in our "diſpoſitions." SERM. V.

BUT leaving theſe more general reflections, I proceed to conſider (as what is neceſſary to do juſtice to the ſubject itſelf, as well as moſt evidently ſo on account of our *public temper* and *manners* as a people) I proceed, I ſay, more particularly (but briefly) to conſider the true nature of that moſt flagrant and horrid crime, to which the ſixth Commandment directly relates. And as our Tranſlation has ſo expreſs'd this precept, that exceptions are neceſſary to be made, it may be proper diſtinctly to ſpecify what *theſe exceptions* are; and then

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then the whole of what remains, that is not and cannot in reaſon be excepted, will neceſſarily fall under the denomination of *Murder*, and help us to form the exact idea and definition of it — And the *firſt* caſe, that plainly appears to be exempted from the cognizance of this Law, is, when a perſon is killed by mere chance, without any *intention*, any *foreſight* or remote *ſuſpicion*, of ſuch a deplorable event, by the unhappy but *involuntary* inſtrument of his death. If there was the leaſt *preſumption* in his mind that any *Act* of his (notwithſtanding this preſumption *deliberately* performed) might prove in its conſequences *fatal* to his Neighbour, he muſt certainly incur, to a very conſiderable degree, the guilt of a *murderous* diſpoſition, if not from direct and formal *Malice*, yet at leaſt from an *indifference* and *levity* of mind, which, when his Brother's life is *diſcerned* to be in danger, is not barely *inexcuſeable*, but highly *criminal*. But if the whole affair was in its *riſe* and *conduct* entirely accidental, he is altogether *clear* of the imputation of Murder, though upon other Accounts he

may be juſtly *blameable*. I ſay, juſtly *blameable* upon other accounts, becauſe if ſuch an accident as this ſhould be owing to *careleſſneſs*; if a perſon grown to years of *diſcretion*, and whoſe *reaſon* in all points of moment ought to be conſulted, ſhould indeliberately and preſumptuouſly *ſport* with *inſtruments* of *Death*; or ſhould deſtroy the life of another in the *execution* of ſome *wild* deſign, in the *impetuous* purſuit of pleaſure, or in any *unneceſſary* and *wanton* competitions; he would have reaſon to *lament* it, as one of the moſt ſolid *misfortunes* of his life, brought upon him by a large ſhare of guilt, though it might not be neceſſary for him (with the inward pangs and terror which he felt) to offer up *David*'s petition — *deliver me from* blood-guiltineſs, *O God, thou God of my Salvation* — Again killing in *neceſſary Self-defence* is not only excuſeable, but perfectly innocent. For then the *fault* wholly lies on the ſide of the *Aggreſſor*; every Man having a natural and unqueſtionable *right* to ſtand up and exert himſelf, in the *ſupport* of his own life, againſt

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Pſal. li. 14.

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dertaken with *ambitious views*, from the mere purſuit of *falſe glory* and *extent* of Empire, are loaded with a *complication* of Murders. And all ſuch turbulent Princes (who delight in the effuſion of human Blood) inſtead of having their names celebrated with honour, ought to be deteſted, and devoted to peculiar infamy, as the peſts and ſcourges of *human nature* and *human ſociety*: As they will undoubtedly ſink into the loweſt *diſgrace*, when they ſtand at the bar of God, the ſupreme *Monarch* and *Judge*; before whoſe infinite Majeſty, and eternal high-lifted Throne, all created diſtinctions muſt vaniſh, and *bad Kings* be reduced to the rank of *Men*, and to *a level* with the meaneſt of their ſubjects.—I ſhall only add that the putting to Death notorious Criminals, by way of *terror*, whoſe lives are a *juſt forfeit* to ſociety, cannot be included within the prohibition of the ſixth Commandment; becauſe without ſuch *exemplary ſeverities*, in ſome caſes at leaſt, the *fundamental principles* of all civil inſtitutions of Government muſt be overthrown. But when the *ends* of Govern-

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ment may be answered, with *equal* terror and *more* public use, without inflicting *capital* punishment on the offender, the depriving him of Life cannot be so easily defended: And both *reasons* of *policy*, and the *precept* contained in the Text, seem to demand the exercise of greater *lenity*.

AND now from the *exempt* cases, which have been particularly proposed, the precise nature, and true definition, of the crime of *Murder* will be easily collected. It is not *accidental* killing; and therefore it must be *essential* to it, that the life of our neighbour be not only destroyed by *violence*, but with *design*. It must be done without *a just cause*, without any *necessity*, and not either in *private* or *public Self-defence*. It is the taking away of a Life not *forfeited*, a Life that ought to have been *preserved*, a Life over which we have no *authority*, no right of *disposal*, and of one who has either never *offended* and deserved *ill* from us, or whose injuries ought to be absolutely overlook'd, or, at most, *corrected* by a *lighter* punishment; but, in the most rigid construction,

tion, cannot merit *Death*. And I deſire that it may be remembered, for the uſe which may hereafter be made of it, " That in all caſes, particularly, of *pri-* " *vately revenging* whether real or ima- " ginary wrongs, where Death is not, " and cannot be, a *deſerved* puniſhment, " the infliction of it muſt of neceſſity be " *a degree* of *Murder*." — Having thus ſhewn the *nature* of the crime itſelf, it will be proper juſt to obſerve the ſeveral *aggravations* of it. The *loweſt* of all is, when it proceeds from *ſudden* and *tumultuous* paſſion, which darkens and diſorders reaſon, and hinders its *interpoſing* to prevent malignant and pernicious effects. This may be a *comparative* extenuation in reſpect of *worſe* cauſes, but will not be ſufficient to juſtify us before the *Divine*, or any *impartial human*, Tribunal; becauſe it is urging *one immorality*, which we *might* and *ought* to have avoided, in defence of *another*. " And no ſolid rea- " ſon can be aſſigned, why my Life may, " with more *equity*, fall a ſacrifice to " *precipitate paſſion*, that to *deliberate* " *malice*."

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" *malice.*" The thing laſt mentioned, *viz. cool revenge* and *conſiderate maliciouſneſs*, is the *next degree* of aggravation of the guilt of *Murder*, the former being as *truly* Murder, and as *really*, though not *equally*, criminal. But the *worſt poſſible* circumſtance that, I think, we can conceive of, and which argues a habit of vice little leſs than *deſperate*, is, when Murders are undertaken (as they often have been) neither from a *too harſh* and *barbarous* reſentment of injuries, nor from any *perſonal* provocations, but merely for *hire*. " This *Trade* of *Death* repreſents " to us a moſt *ſtupendous* Monſter in ra- " tional nature; and exhibits a pitch of " depravity, beyond which even the De- " vils themſelves, however *emulous* to ex- " cel in vice, can hardly be thought to " aſpire."

To all that has been already offered, it may not be improper to ſubjoin, that there are *ſeveral ways* of committing *Murder*, beſides that of an *immediate* attack upon our Neighbour's life. He that by a falſe oath, in a Court of Judicature, is the means

means of an innocent Perſon's being con- SERM. victed of *a capital* offence (on account of V. which he *unjuſtly* ſuffers *Death*) is as much a *Murderer*, as if he had been *directly* and *perſonally* the cauſe of his Death by *poiſon* or the *ſword*. And a greater diſhonour and ſhame to Human nature, one more pernicious in ſociety than this, 'tis impoſſible for us to form an idea of; who adds *Perjury* to Murder; and deſtroys the *good name* and *character* of the undeſerving Sufferer, together with his *life*. This caſe is *flagrant*, and capable of having no *falſe* colours put upon it that will, in the leaſt, *palliate* its malignity. But there are others, where, though there be a conſiderable ſhare of the ſame *unnatural guilt* contracted, the *Conſcience* of the Offender does not appear to give him any ſuch *alarm*; and where, as there is no *legal cognizance* of the crime, the *cenſure* of the World is generally more *mild* and *favourable*. — He, notwithſtanding, may juſtly be denominated a Murderer, who, by his *ſevere* and *cruel* treatment of thoſe who are ſub-

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ject to his Authority, brings them to an *immature* and *untimely* Death; and cannot be prevail'd with to relax, and abate of his *rigour*, though he plainly ſees that their ſtrength is *gradually* exhauſted, and that they droop, and languiſh, and pine away under their *oppreſſion*. — A wicked and unnatural Son, likewiſe, who finding his ſtubborn inſolent carriage, and riotous living, to be the cauſe of *deep* and *mortal* grief and affliction to his Parents, will not be brought within the limits of his duty, nor relinquiſh his infamous pleaſures, though their comfort, their health, their *life* (through an *exceſs*, indeed, of affection towards an object ſo undeſerving) depend upon his reformation; what is he leſs than a kind of *Murderer*, nay an impious *Parricide*, involved in the guilt of moſt aggravated and *ſacrilegious* Murder! — And the caſe will be much the ſame, if an Huſband forgetting his *obligations*, and repaying tender affection with *contempt* and *barbarity*, and *adulterous violations* of the ſacred Marriage vow, firſt renders

miſerable, and then *ſhortens* that life, which he ought, in *duty* and *honour*, to have cheriſhed and preſerved. SERM. V. " He is " *convinced*, that his unkindneſs and in- " fidelity *operate* in the manner of *a ſlow* " *poiſon*, and as *certainly* and *effectually* " tend to Death; to a *tedious* and *lin-* " *gering* Death, occaſioned by *a ſucceſ-* " *ſion* of Torments and Diſquietudes. " How then can he, in *equity*, be ex- " cuſed from the *guilt* of one that had " actually adminiſtred *poiſon*, and of " ſuch *a kind* too, as muſt ſubject the " Patient to moſt *exquiſite* ſufferings, and " *multiply* the pangs and horrors of her " diſſolution?" — This it may be thought is *ſtraining*, and carrying matters to an *unuſual height*: For the *exceſs*, allowing it to be ſuch, is *common*, eſpecially (it may be ſcandalouſly inſinuated, to leſſen the odium that would otherwiſe univerſally attend it) in higher and more independent life; and very few ſurely will, therefore, be ſo *extremely rigid*, as to load it with the imputation of *Murder*. But, in oppoſition to this *looſe*

SERM. V. and *careleſs* way of *moralizing*, let it be conſidered, that neither *common practice*, nor any outward *diſtinctions* of rank and title, nor pretended *politeneſs* and *elegance* of taſte are *a rule of action* to reaſonable Beings; but the *fixed* and *immutable nature* of things only, and the *revealed will* of God. But if the voice of *reaſon* be attended to, if the authority of *revelation* be *reverently* acknowledged and allowed its due weight, the conduct, which I have endeavoured to expoſe in its true colours, will infallibly fall under condemnation. What *it is in itſelf* every Man may eaſily diſcern; if it be groſſly *immoral*, neither the *multitude* of tranſgreſſors, nor their *exalted character*, will avail at all towards its *juſtification*: And it muſt be much better for us (if *any degree* of *Murder* there be, or any *affinity* to a crime againſt which eternal damnation is denounced) to be *informed* of it while it is in our power, in many caſes, to *prevent* the *guilt*, than to be *utterly* and *irrecoverably* confounded, by having the *firſt charge* brought againſt

againſt us by omniſcience and unerring juſtice, to which no *anſwer*, no *objection*, can be made; aud from whence, as ſupreme in Majeſty and right of *deciſion*, no *appeal* can poſſibly ariſe. SERM. V.

To all which I beg leave to add, for a concluſion of this diſcourſe, that the heinous offence prohibited in the Text is not only a moſt *ſignal*, but an *irreparable*, injury done to a *fellow-creature*; irreparable with reſpect to *the loſs of preſent animal Life*, and irreparable, likewiſe, with reſpect to *the ſtate of the Soul*, whatever it be, as to its *everlaſting exiſtence* hereafter: That it is an *indignity* offered to *human nature* itſelf, and a *preying* upon *our own kind*; which is to the the higheſt degree *unnatural*: That it is, with moſt impious boldneſs, uſurping the *authority* of the *Lord*, the *giver* and *ſole proprietor* of Life, by whoſe *laws alone* therefore, of direct and plain conſequence, both *Life* and *Death* are to be regulated and determined: And, to mention no more, that it hurts *ſociety* by depriving it of *one* of its members, makes

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diſconſolate *Widows* and helpleſs *Orphans*, and may occaſion moſt deplorable *confuſion* and *diſtreſs* in *families*. Theſe things, "together with the *depravity* of *heart* "diſcovered, the utter alienation from "*God*, from *moral rectitude*, from all "*ſocial affections* and *inclinations*, the "*inſenſible* temper, the *contempt* of *juſ*-"*tice*, the *preparedneſs* of mind for *any* "*villany*," evidently demonſtrate the character of the *Murderer* to be the moſt infamous and hurtful in the whole ſcope of *immoral* and *wicked Life*; and ſhould put us upon *guarding* ſtrictly againſt every thing that has the *leaſt tendency*, the moſt *remote aſſimilation*, to it — "Againſt raſh "anger, headſtrong and impetuous paſ-"ſion, all ſchemes of revenge, all *pro*-"*fuſe gratifications* of luxury, midnight "revellings, haſty quarrels, *&c.* which may "put it out of our power to *retreat* from "the *ignominy* and *guilt* of Murder itſelf, "and *its everlaſting loſs of peace*." And, above all, let us not ſuffer our minds ever to degenerate into an *eſtabliſhed rancour* againſt, and *hatred* of our Brother: For as this

this is the *direct ſource* of ſo tremendous and fatal an evil, St. *John* hath expreſſly declared; that he that *hateth his Brother is a* Murderer — *And ye know that no* Murderer *hath eternal Life abiding in him.* SERM. V. 1 John iii. 15.

SER-

Of Murder.

Murder, Manslaughter, and Self-murder.

Murder is the killing of any person with malice aforethought, either express or implied: which malice is implied by law in every voluntary killing of another, unless it happens in a duel, or on a sudden quarrel, or by misadventure, or in self-defence. To which may be added, that no modern distemper whatsoever, how violent soever in its symptoms, can excuse the commission of this crime.

Manslaughter is the unlawful killing of another without malice either express or implied: which may happen either by killing an unresisting person, or by killing another in the sudden heat of blood, or by doing an unlawful act not amounting to felony, or by the careless performance of a lawful act.

Self-murder is the act of wilfully killing one's self, or counselling another to kill him, which is equally criminal.

SERMON VI.

Of DUELS, and SELF-MURDER.

EXODUS xx. 13.

Thou ſhalt not kill.

IN my laſt Diſcourſe, I endeavoured to ſtate, diſtinctly, the nature of the foul and horrid ſin of *Murder*; which is ſo clear to the univerſal ſenſe of mankind, that it is generally a heavy and inſupportable burden upon the conſcience of the Criminal himſelf, and cries aloud to Heaven, for the infliction of peculiar and diſtinguiſhed Vengeance, in the judgment of the moſt *barbarous* nations. I likewiſe briefly

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SERM. VI. briefly conſidered the ſeveral *Degrees* and *Aggravations* of this crime, and tried to inſpire ſuch a lively Dread and Abhorrence of it, as would put us upon maintaining, always, the ſtricteſt guard againſt every *Approach* towards it, againſt every thing that might, in its *Conſequences*, lead to it. And this was thought the more neceſſary, becauſe vice is in the nature of it *progreſſive*; and the larger ſcope it is allowed to take, the human temper, however *naturally* well diſpoſed and *inclined* to virtue, becomes more and more *eſtranged* from it, more and more ſtupid and *inſenſible* of ill, and conſequently prepared for proceeding, gradually, to the very worſt *Extremes*. So that thoſe who never were, as yet, *actually* Murderers may have, in the vices which they *now* indulge and cheriſh, the *latent ſeeds* of Murder; and however they may flatter and practice upon themſelves the ſmooth arts of *Self-Deceit*, they really know not, blinded as they are, and hurried on as they may be, by their extravagancies, what *fatal violences* they may in the end be rendered capable of committing. But

as

as there are ſome exceſſes, that have a more cloſe and viſible *Connection* than others with the crime forbidden in the text, it was adviſed that we be particularly careful to avoid *theſe*, as ſnares of *Blood*, from whence we have reaſon to apprehend uncommon danger. SERM. VI.

I NOW proceed to conſider, particularly, two Caſes that are of ſpecial importance, and they are, *Duelling*, *and Self-Murder:* Which muſt be allowed, on the firſt propoſal of them, to have at leaſt an evident *relation* to the preſent ſubject, and therefore a diſcourſe upon them cannot be thought a *needleſs* and *arbitrary* digreſſion. —— I ſhall begin then, according to the order in which they were mentioned, with *Duelling*,—— " an in-
" famous, and I think I may juſtly add,
" *ſavage* practice, fit only to be retained
" among fierce untamed Barbarians; but
" which ought to be baniſhed from eve-
" ry Country profeſſing *Humanity*, and
" where *Juſtice*, *Generoſity*, and *Placa-*
" *bility* are acknowledged to be *ſocial*
" *Virtues*,

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" *Virtues*, and Ornaments to Human " Nature." Were Mankind entirely given up, in their *original Make*, to the direction and guidance of their *Paſſions*; or were there *implanted* in them ſtrong and irreſiſtible inſtincts of *Revenge*, blindly prompting to *deſtroy* each other; or were they *wild* and *undiſciplined* as the brutes are, and ſubject to no *Orders* and *Regulations* of Civil Government; nothing *better* could be expected from them, but that they would furiouſly aſſault and prey upon each other. But as they are indued with a ſuperior principle of *Self-Government* to *temperate* and *controul* all ſudden impulſes of Rage and Anger; as they find with themſelves *ſocial* affections, and ſentiments of *common Benevolence*; as they know, by experience, that *every one* ſtands in need of indulgence, and of having candid allowances made for innumerable indiſcretions and involuntary errors, which ſpring from *Incautiouſneſs* and *Precipitation*, and not from a real *Intention* to offend; as they are capable, by the exerciſe of juſt Reflection, to *diſtinguiſh* Crimes, and allot to each an *equal*,

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equal, and not an *indiſcriminate* and *diſproportioned* puniſhment; as they are united together in *Society*, and, of conſequence, are bound to ſubmit to the *Laws* of it for the preſervation of publick Order; and, finally, as they are inſpired with a *native Horror* of *Cruelty*, and of thirſting after *human Blood*: It is *ſurpriſing* extravagance that they are ſo apt to magnify trifles into *capital* Offences, and ſuffer themſelves to be tranſported by a vindictive temper to ſuch *violent Reſentments*, as are notorious breaches of *Equity*, and oftentimes occaſion moſt melancholy ſcenes of *Diſtreſs* and *Confuſion*. Men may call this *boiſterous* and *inhuman* method of proceeding by what *Names* they pleaſe; but it is impoſſible, in the nature of things, that it ſhould ever be reconciled with *Virtue*, *Religion*, *univerſal Benevolence*, or with any *worthy* notions and principles of *Honour*: "Unleſs it be "eſſential to conſtitute *a Man of Honour*, "(as the *modiſh* affected phraſe is) that "he be *inflexibly rigid*, and prone to *Re*"*venge*, without any thing of *Forbear*"*ance* and *Mercy*, any thing of *Benevo*-

"*lence*

SERM. VI. "*lence* and *mildneſs*, i. e. in ſhort, without any thing truly *refined* and *amiable* "in his compoſition." And if this be really the notion of *Honour*, among theſe *Sons* of Anger and of captious haſty Reſentment, it will not be the *only* inſtance, in which they have ſubſtituted *mere Names* in the Place of ſubſtantial Excellence; nor, indeed, in which they have made uſe of them to *ſupplant* moſt important virtues, and *recommend* Folly and Extravagance.

BUT that I may not be thought to have nothing to offer againſt the practice of *Duelling*, beſides general invectives, I beg leave to enter a little more diſtinctly into the Subject; being, myſelf, firmly perſwaded, that the more minutely and largely it is conſidered, it will only appear ſo much the more *indefenſible*.—— The *firſt* Enquiry then that naturally occurs, eſpecially in a diſcourſe on the ſixth Commandment, is, how far *Duelling* falls within the ſcope of the Crime therein forbidden; or in plainer terms, and paying no regard at all to the prejudices either of the *Great* or of the *Vulgar*, whether

whether or no, in a ſtrict and fair way of reaſoning, it falls under the denomination of *Murder*, the *laſt extreme* of human corruption, and the moſt aggravated offence, that can poſſibly be committed, againſt the *nature* and *happineſs* of Man, and the *wiſe purpoſes* of Society. And in order to determine this point, let us attend once more to the true idea and definition of Murder. —— It is the taking away the life of a man without *a cauſe*, i.e. without *a ſufficient cauſe*; or, if we were to add without *a provocation*, it muſt ſtill mean without *a ſufficient provocation*; If " therefore, in any caſes of injury, the of- " fence does not *merit* death, but a much " ſlighter and gentler correction, the in- " fliction of death being abſolutely *un- " juſt*, and deſtitute of any *proper autho- " rity*, any *ſolid reaſon* in the nature of " things, to ſupport it, it can be nothing " elſe but *Murder*; ſince it anſwers fully " to every branch of the above mention- " ed uncontеſtably *right* and *exact* de- " ſcription of it."

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EXACTLY in proportion as a puniſhment is *undeſerved* (I ſpeak now of the *ſtricteſt* and moſt *accurate* calculations of equity) ſo far innocence *unjuſtly ſuffers*: "If the puniſhment be only bodily tor-"ture, innocence is *unjuſtly tortured*; if "it be death, an innocent perſon is *un-*"*juſtly deprived of life*, or, which is the "very ſame, *murdered*." And in the caſe of *Duelling*, where it happens that a life is *actually* deſtroyed, there is both violent killing, and a deſign to kill. The violence is without a juſt ground, without a ſufficient authority; the life that is taken away ought to have been preſerved; "would not have been *forfeited* were "mankind in *a ſtate of nature*; and is "*protected* by the *laws* of *civil ſociety*." ——What then can the inſtrument of ſuch deſtruction be but a *Murderer*, a *deliberate cool* Murderer, the worſt of criminals; ſince there is not a *ſingle* circumſtance wanting, that is *eſſential* to the conſtitution of this crime? I have all along taken it for granted, that upon thoſe occaſions, from whence *Duelling* uſually

commences, the punishment is *inadequate* to the offence. And I believe even those persons, whose nice *fantastical* honour has in a great measure perverted their judgment, and extirpated their sense of humanity, will not deliberately venture to assert, that a *hasty word*, a *passionate reflection*, or even a *wilful aspersion* thrown upon their character, are always crimes so great, that nothing but the *blood* of the defamer can expiate. If they are, they may justly be made *capital* by the *public laws* of the community; but sure I am, that if any government should punish such offences as these with *death*, it would be universally exclaimed against as *excessive injustice* and *cruelty*: "Which "evidently shews that it is unjust and "cruel *in itself*; and that there is no "other difference between such a pub-"lick sentence and private revenge than "this, that the one is MURDER *esta-*"*blished by a law*, and the other *lawless* "MURDER."

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I KNOW but of one thing, that can, with the least face of plausibility, be ob-

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jected to invalidate the force of this reaſoning, and that is, that in theſe *inhuman revenges* the ſuppoſed criminal is not *abſolutely* devoted to death; but that the perſon injured puts himſelf upon *a level* with him, and gives him a fair chance of taking away his life, and preſerving his own. But to this I would anſwer—that the preſumed offence is of ſuch a nature, that the life of a man ought not, upon the ſtrict principles of *juſtice*, to be put in *any danger* upon the account of it. And if it be actually deſtroyed by *deſign* and *violence* (as in the preſent caſe) when in equity it ought *not* to be deſtroyed, it muſt be impoſſible, for the mildeſt and moſt indulgent caſuiſt, to find any other denomination for ſuch an action but *Murder*, whatever its accidental concomitant circumſtances are. And how monſtrous is the *plea* offered to extenuate this guilt, "that the *injured* perſon (as he aſſerts "himſelf to be) voluntarily *invites*, and, "as far as in him lies, *compells* the *injurious* to repair *one* injury by a *greater*; "and calls this, in very *ridicule*, as it "ſhould

" ſhould ſeem, and *deſpite* of juſtice, SERM.
" and inſolent behaviour to the common VI.
" ſenſe of mankind——*Satisfaction!*"

Such topics as theſe will ſcarce bear a *moral* debate, they are ſo extremely abſurd and frivolous; and muſt therefore be look'd upon as the effects of an unbridled licentiouſneſs, and one of the *frantic ſallies* of *falſe Honour:* I ſay *falſe Honour*, becauſe ſuch turbulent ſpirits can with too much freedom, and without any checks either of *ingenuity* or *ſhame*, allow themſelves a ſcope in *oppreſſion*, *lewdneſs*, *adultery*, *corruption*, and other ſcandalous vices, which render them *baſe* and *deſpicable* in themſelves, and *actually deſpiſed* by the ſober and conſiderate part of mankind.—And yet they are very *delicate*, and *nice*, and *tender* of their *Honour*—What an inconſiſtency, what a moſt palpable and ſhameful contradiction, is this? and how evidently does it demonſtrate, that not *real* honour, but *fancy*, *paſſion*, *pride*, and a *diſordered impatient* ſpirit, are the predominant principles in the whole of their conduct.

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LET me add to all this, that this ſpecies of *Murder*, though it be ſheltered under the name of honour, cannot poſſibly be reduced to any *certain* and *uniform* laws or rules of equity. This obſervation is founded on the *neceſſary difference*, that there always will be, in the particular ſituations and circumſtances of men — Suppoſe then that a perſon without a *family*, or any that are nearly *dependent* upon him for their well-being, ſhould think himſelf affronted by another, whoſe life is the ſureſt pledge of felicity to many, who are united to him in the ſtricteſt and moſt indearing bonds of Nature; or ſuppoſe a very great *diſparity* in *fortune*; or in reſpect of *importance* and *uſefulneſs* to the public; it is hardly poſſible, in caſes of this kind, that any *face* of *reaſon* or *equity* can be preſerved: Eſpecially when, as it commonly happens, the affront is *ſlight* or entirely *imaginary*. This crime, therefore, muſt argue ſuch *a defect* in notions of juſtice, as would hardly be excuſeable in the moſt ignorant and unpoliſhed *Heathen* Nations. — And this leads me to another remark, very proper to be made

made in a *Chriſtian* audience, and that is, SERM. VI.
that *Duelling* is moſt evidently repugnant to that *mild* and *gentle* temper, that *ſoft* ſpirit of *forbearance*, which the Goſpel inculcates as an eſſential part of *true religion*. *Forgive one another, even as God, in Chriſt, hath forgiven you; if ye forgive not Men their treſpaſſes, neither will your Father forgive your trepaſſes*; this is the conſtant ſtrain and tenor of the New Teſtament. But men of an inflexible and ſtubborn revenge and *blood-thirſty* honour, inſtead of being propitious and condeſcending, demand a moſt cruel and barbarous ſatisfaction for the moſt *trivial* injuries. — "And therefore I ſee no ſub- "ſtantial ground, according to the Chriſ- "tian ſcheme, on which they can poſſi- "bly *hope* for *Salvation.*" Eph. iv. 32. Matt. vi. 15.

BUT perhaps the perſons, of whom I am ſpeaking, may be but little influenced by the declarations of *revealed* religion, or, in their preſent *fantaſtic* taſte, they may think *infidelity*, as well as Duelling, to be a point of *honour* and genteel diſtinction; and, indeed, unleſs their *morals* were more conformable to the rules of our holy reli-

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gion, one could ſcarce, in *Charity*, *wiſh* them to be Chriſtians. — But I favourably preſume, however, that they are not *Atheiſts*: For if ſo, I know of no reaſonings that will probably be effectual with them, but what are built on motives of *intereſt* and *preſent good*. Arguments drawn from the *conſtitution* of Nature, and the viſible *eſtabliſhed laws* of Nature, can have no weight; becauſe *Nature itſelf* may be erroneous, if it be not the *effect* of ſome intelligent diſcerning cauſe. The *Atheiſt*, as long as he retains his prejudices againſt Deity and a ſupreme Government of the Univerſe, I muſt for ever deſpair of being able to *inſtruct* in any principles or duties of *morality*. But if the *Duelliſt* be *a Believer* in God; if he believes alſo a *Providence*; that the preſent Life is a *probationary* ſcene with reſpect to mankind; and that there is another ſtate to come of *exact* and *equal* retribution, in which their happineſs or miſery will be finally determined according to their character and behaviour here: — I would *then* propoſe, to his more retired and ſerious reflections, the following *caſe*, and leave

leave it to make what *impreſſion* it naturally *may*, and *ought* to, make, for the regulation of his future temper and conduct. It is beyond queſtion, upon the principles here preſumed, a *poſſible* caſe; and I ſhall ſtate it as if it was that of an *indifferent* perſon, in which he himſelf has no *immediate concern*, that he may examine it with a more diſſintereſted impartiality. "Suppoſe then *any man*, "with whoſe *character* and *ſituation* in "life you are entirely unacquainted, to "have *challenged* another for a paſſio-"nate expreſſion, an idle rumour, or, "if you pleaſe, for a malicious re-"flection and directly calling in que-"ſtion his *veracity*; and ſuppoſe that, "in this conteſt of *honour*, the perſon "*offending* ſhould be ſent to his ac-"count *careleſs*, *licentious*, and *unprepar-"ed*, with *all his ſins* freſh and heavy "upon him, without having an oppor-"tunity for one thoroughly *ſedate* and "*ſerious* thought of repentance and re-"formation — A moſt *affecting* circum-"ſtance, and beyond expreſſion *terrible* "— And imagine, likewiſe, the *aggreſ-*

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"*ſor*

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" *for* to have received at the ſame time, " with many *crimes* and *ſtains* upon his " Soul, his *paſſport* into immortality. " — What the *conſequence* muſt be I al- " moſt tremble to mention, and every " one here preſent will *anticiptate* with " horror. — He ſues for *mercy*; but is " anſwered, that he himſelf diſcovered a " temper moſt *ſevere* and *implacable*, and " proſecuted his Brother, with *unnatural* " *revenge*, for an offence that was in it- " ſelf *inconſiderable*; that he deſtroyed " his *life*, involved his *family* in *inconſo-* " *lable* ſorrow, cut him off *unthinking* " and *impenitent*, and, by that means, " compleated his *ruin* to *eternity*: And " can he *expect* mercy for his own infi- " nitely *more aggravated* crimes, who, " during the ſtate of his probation, was " thus abſolutely *deſtitute* of mercy?" Should *this reply* be made to him, as it moſt fitly may by the ſupreme Judge, though his *clemency* be equal to his *juſtice*, he muſt, in my opinion, neceſſarily ſink under the confuſion and weight of his *guilt*; his own *reaſon*, and every *moral*

principle

principle within him, juſtifying and confirming the ſentence. SERM. VI.

HAVING thus largely conſidered the caſe of *Duelling*, and evidently ſhewn that it is a ſpecies of the *unnatural* crime forbidden by the *ſixth* Commandment, and utterly inconſiſtent with *reaſon*, *equity*, *benevolence*, *true honour*, and *Chriſtianity*: I am now, according to the Method which I propoſed to follow, to treat of *Self-Murder*, a practice equally ſhocking and horrible, and equally, though in a different ſenſe, an offence againſt *Nature*; a ſuppreſſion of ſome of its moſt lively and powerful *inſtincts*, and a violation of its original and univerſal *laws*. The love and deſire of *life* is a paſſion *inſeparable* from the preſent conſtitution of *humanity*; and, of conſequence, ſome degree likewiſe of averſion and ſhrinking back from *Death*, eſpecially from a *violent* Death, though in a juſt and worthy Cauſe. And, therefore, for a man to become his own executioner is ſo abſolutely *unaccountable* upon all principles, whether of *reaſon* or inſtinct, that it is, by the general ſuffrage of Mankind, aſcribed

SERM. VI. cribed to a *crazed* and *diſtempered* mind. The unhappy perſon is ſuppoſed to have loſt the regular uſe of his underſtanding, and, by that means, the very power of *Self-command* and juſt *Self-direction*, before he could be rendred capable of committing ſo fatal and dreadful an extravagance. Which is the ſame in effect with aſſerting, that no other ſpecious or colourable excuſe can be aſſigned for it than this, that the Self-Murderer was, before, in a manner *extinct* and *blotted* out from among men; that he was deprived of the nobleſt *diſtinction* of his Nature, and had ceaſed to be a *moral* agent; that he was no longer a *fit ſubject* of laws, no longer *accountable*; but that his conduct was the reſult of mere *animal* and *brutal* impulſe.

WHETHER this be *ſtrict* and *right* reaſoning there is great room to queſtion; becauſe it has no other foundation than this to ſupport it, that the action is in itſelf *ſtrange*, and to the laſt exceſs *unnatural*. "But we ſee, in various other caſes, that "Mankind can offer the *utmoſt violence* "to Nature, and to its plaineſt and "ſtrong-

" ſtrongeſt dictates and affections, through SERM.
" a *viciouſneſs* and *depravity* of *mind* VI.
" which they have *voluntarily* contract-
" ed; and *violences* too, that are in all
" reſpects equal to the *worſt* that, we
" can repreſent to ourſelves, have been,
" or ever will be, occaſioned by any
" *accidental diſorder* in its faculties."
Every one, therefore, that acts *unreaſonably* is not to be eſteem'd as deſtitute of the *internal powers* of reaſon; the wild and *thoughtleſs* libertine muſt not be judged as if he wanted *a capacity* to think; and, by the ſame rule, a man that behaves in ſuch a manner as if he was under the influence of a *real* and *unavoidable* phrenzy (which is the caſe of many *other ſinners* beſides the *Self-Murderer*) may not be *innocently* or *excuſeably* mad. He may be violent, furious, raving, and frantic with *deſign*. *Nature* may have done *her part* by ſeaſonable and friendly admonitions, and repeated checks and remonſtrances, to prevent all ſuch ſcandalous and hurtful exceſſes: And then in the moſt gentle, if it be alſo a wiſe and equitable, conſtruction of the caſe,

SERM. VI. caſe, the offender muſt be *blame-worthy*, and deſerve ſome *puniſhment* that bears a *proportion* to the *degree* of *extravagance* in his way of thinking, in his paſſions, in his common practice, or in any particular action; to the *degree*, I ſay, of that extravagance which the indulgence and purſuit of *vice* has been the ſole cauſe of; which ſprings from the want of *due reflection*; from ſtubbornneſs, pride, diſcontent, or any *criminal* principles; or from a *licentious* and *ungoverned* temper.

I MAKE no doubt, indeed, but that, in many inſtances, thoſe who have ſo far renounced and ſhook off the *ties* of *Nature*, as to commit the *deteſtable violence* of Murder upon themſelves, have been *actually* impair'd in their reaſon, and the proper uſe of their intellectual powers. But of this the *fact itſelf*, monſtrous as it is, and extremely hard to be otherwiſe accounted for, is no *certain* demonſtration; "becauſe *vice* can be altogether as "bloody and barbarous as the moſt un-"governable *diſtraction*, and diſorder'd "*paſſions*

" *paſſions* may operate as blindly and out- SERM.
" rageouſly, and produce the very ſame VI.
" miſchiefs and fatal conſequences, as a
" diſorder'd *underſtanding*." Beſides, even upon this moſt favourable ſuppoſition, there is ſtill *a diſtinction* neceſſary to be made, in order to fix, in particular caſes of Self-Murder, the *juſt degree* of guilt; becauſe there may be a difference of *circumſtances*, that will oblige us to paſs a different *judgment* upon *two* facts of the ſame *ſeeming* horror and *melancholy* aſpect, even where a ſtate of *lunacy* is allowed to be, in *both*, inconteſtable.—If this *diſtemper* of the mind, which ſo wofully effaces the proper *characters* and *ſignatures* of humanity, and every thing within us in which we have the honour to *reſemble* our Maker, be entirely our *misfortune*, and *ſuch* an effect of natural cauſes as it was not in our power to have *avoided*; we are then moſt certainly *innocent* with reſpect to any *conſequences* that may happen to follow upon it. If we are raging and miſchievous, we are reduced to the *condition* of ravenous and ſavage *Animals*, who find themſelves prompted

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prompted (and *irreſiſtibly* prompted, as they have no ſuperior principle of reflection and choice) to *hurt* and *deſtroy*. And *this*, as to all *guilt* and an *after-reckoning*, muſt and will excuſe us. "But "what if the fit of *Madneſs*, in which "*Self-Murder* is committed, be brought "upon us by our own *fault?* What if it "be the *genuine fruit* of our *luxurious* "and *extravagant* living, the product of "*vanity* and of a *proud aſpiring* temper, or owing to the *voluntary* indulgence of any *exceſſive* and conſequently *unnatural* paſſion? This muſt undoubtedly make a wide difference between the *preſent* caſe, and that *already* ſtated.—— Self-Murder *here* is the conſequence, the *natural* conſequence, of "*guilt*; and, therefore, it is almoſt a contradiction in terms to aſſert, that the "*act* of violence itſelf may be abſolutely "*clear* and *free* from *guilt*. It ſprang indeed, more *immediately*, from a *diſtraction* of mind: But from whence did *that* diſtraction ſpring? — from a "*depraved* inward diſpoſition, from *perverted* affections, from *ambition*, *impatience*,

" *patience*, *intemperance*, and voluntary " *ſelf-corruption:* And it is impoſſible " that the *effects* of ſuch *bad cauſes* ſhould " be innocent. They are not *ſo* reputed " upon the eſtabliſhed principles and me- " thods of juſtice, that take place in *hu-* " *man* governments. If one man kills " another in a *furious tranſport* of paſſi- " on, which throws the whole *ſoul*, and " the *body* too, into ſuch agitations and " diſtortions as very nearly reſemble a " *natural phrenzy*; he is, notwithſtand- " ing this *violent diſorder*, which, while " it laſts, *blinds* and *controuls* all his ſu- " perior faculties, convicted and puniſhed " as a *Murderer*. The very *ſame degree* " of wild *tumult* and *confuſion* within, " and *incapacity* for reaſoning, had it " been an *accidental* diſtemper which he " was not able to *prevent*, would have " been thought ſufficient to *acquit* him " in any reaſonable and impartial court " of juſtice; but he is righteouſly *con-* " *demned* when it is paſſion *voluntarily* " *indulged*. And juſt ſo the *Self-Mur-* " *derer*, though a *lunatick*, muſt expect " to be cited and dealt with as a *criminal*

SERM. VI. "at the bar of ſupreme juſtice, if the diſtemper, which *occaſioned* this execrable attempt, was procured and entailed upon him by his *vices*. And as I believe that this will be found, upon an accurate examination, to be neareſt the truth, in *moſt* of the deplorable events that happen of this kind; we have too much reaſon, upon the whole, to fear, that *few* of theſe unhappy perſons will be treated with ſo much tenderneſs and lenity *hereafter*, when it will be of the greateſt and of everlaſting importance, as are generally allotted to their character and memory by their fellow-creatures *here*, where it can to them be of *no poſſible uſe*."

LET me farther add, that upon the ſame foundation on which Self-Murder is ſo readily and conſtantly imputed to *lunacy* (as what, in the common ſentiment of mankind, can never be juſtified on any *ſober* and *rational* principles, and thwarts every *implanted inſtinct* and *propenſion* in human nature, as well as the *preſiding directing* power the underſtanding) upon the ſame foundation, I ſay, it

is, that the *inſtances* of this vice, which occur, are ſo prodigiouſly *few* in number, in compariſon of moſt others that can be named. The bulk of the World are too apt to be *diſcontented*, *reſtleſs*, *apprehenſive* of injury and ill uſage. They *eagerly deſire* more than they *enjoy*, or are ever *likely* to enjoy. They form *abſurd* and *fanciful* ſchemes of happineſs, in which they are *diſappointed*. Their pride is *mortified*; their paſſions are *violent*; they complain of the *tireſome load* of Life, the *dull* and *nauſeous repetition* of its pleaſures: they complain of *themſelves*, and inveigh, with *ill-nature*, againſt the *World* around them. Great multitudes are *diſtreſs'd* in their circumſtances, *unhappy* in their families, *deſerted* by their friends, forced to *deſcend* below their *former* appearance, linger under *gradual* infirmities and decays of Nature, or are exerciſed by ſuch *ſevere* and *acute* pains, that what *calm* and *free ſelf-enjoyment*, what *ſmall taſte* of *happineſs* they have, can in propriety be only ſtiled a *ſhort ceſſation*, or a *gentle interruption* and *abatement* of their *Miſeries*.—And yet though

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one or other of theſe is generally the *ſource*, from which *Self-Murder* takes its riſe, "there is not *one* in *ten thouſand* of "the *diſappointed proud*, the *depreſſed* "and *dejected ambitious*, of the *peeviſh* "*paſſionate* and *complaining*, of the *diſ-* "*quieted anxious* and *deſponding*, who "*curſe* the day of their *birth*, and *ex-* "*claim* againſt the *infelicities* of human "nature;" there is not *one*, I ſay, in *ten thouſand* of this whole tribe (whether in *reality*, or in *imagination*, miſerable) that proceed to the dreadful extremity which I am now conſidering. And *this* I urge as a very fair and probable preſumption, "that *Nature itſelf* is "ſtrongly againſt it: For otherwiſe, as "we conſtantly ſee in the *undoubted* ope- "rations and courſe of nature, where the "*cauſes* are the ſame, the ſame *conſe-* "*quences* would more regularly and uni- "verſally follow." But yet as examples of this kind *ſometimes*, and whenever it *ſo* falls out, *too often* occur, a diſcourſe on the ſubject cannot be unneceſſary; and eſpecially as it is a ſubject ſcarce ever treated

treated of; and the people of *England* are more apt than *any other* nation in *Europe* (where ſuch a diſmal cataſtrophe is very *rare* and *unuſual)* to *aſſault a Life* ſo ſtrongly and *peculiarly* guarded by the wiſe Author of our being. Which, whether it be owing to the *climate*, to any thing *ſingular* in the *complexion* of the inhabitants, or to the *gloomy ſentiments* of *Religion* (naturally tending to the *diſtraction* of weak minds) which, in a land profeſſing *univerſal liberty*, will very *probably* take place, as being moſt adapted to ſome *particular tempers*; I certainly know not, and therefore will not pretend poſitively to determine. It is a ſufficient reaſon for my intermeddling in this affair, that I believe the thing itſelf to be *a vice*, and an oppoſition to the *will* and *law* of God; and that it is imputed to us as a national *diſtemper*, and what reflects *diſhonour* on our country. And if I may be the means of ſaving but *one Life* to the *community*, one *Huſband* and *tender Friend* to an otherwiſe drooping and diſconſolate *Widow*, one *Father* to other-

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SERM. VI. wiſe deſtitute, abandoned, and helpleſs *Orphans*, one *Chriſtian* from diſhonouring his *profeſſion*, one *Man* from attacking and deſtroying, in his own perſon, *human nature*, one *Reaſonable Creature* from rebelling againſt the *conſtitution* and *order* of Providence, or one *immortal Soul* from *raſhly urging its way* into the *preſence* of an omniſcient judge, from whom no *circumſtance*, no *motive* influencing his conduct, can poſſibly be hid: I ſhall think myſelf not to have laboured, not to have preached in vain. Let me now proceed to ſuggeſt *other* arguments, more directly and in form, againſt the deteſtable crime of *Self-Murder*.

AND, in the *Firſt* place, as this diſcourſe is grounded on a paſſage of *Scripture*, it muſt be proper for us to conſider in *what account* this practice ſtands, upon the *principles* of *revealed* Religion. In the ſixth commandment the *Murder*, i. e. the *unjuſt killing*, of *A MAN* is prohibited: And though this, without doubt, was originally deſigned only to prevent the violent attack of *one* man upon the life

life of *another*; yet that does not at all hinder, but that an aſſault upon *his own* life may be *Murder* likewiſe, upon the *ſame* general foundation in the *nature* and *truth* of things. It is not indeed the thing *directly* and *explicitely* condemned; but if the argument *correſponds*, it muſt, if not coincide with the immediate and expreſs *intent* of the prohibition, fall however within the fair and rational *Scope* of it. Let us therefore only *aſſume* it as an indiſputable principle, that by this precept *Murder* is condemned; that muſt of neceſſity be *all Murder*; whether it be, in the *diſtinct Caſes* and *Examples* of it, actually expreſſed or not: For *a ſingle inſtance* is frequently put, in *moral* writings, to denote *a ſpecies* or *kind* of action, which, in every parallel Caſe, muſt be *equally criminal* with that which is particularly alledged.— "Now *Self-Murder* is the *killing* of *a* "*Man*, whom it would have been abſo- "lutely *unlawful* (in the ſame circum- "ſtances) for *any other* human Creature to "*deſtroy*; from whence it muſt follow "that it is the taking away of *a life*, which SERM. VI.

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" the Self-Murderer *himſelf* can have *no* " *right* to deſtroy: Becauſe if that be a " right eſſentially inherent in *him*, he " muſt have an authority, by the Laws " of Nature, to *tranſfer* to others. Nay, " as *no life*, in the preſent *community* of " ſituation and intereſt, can be *juſtly* cut " off, unleſs it be *expedient* for the " good of Mankind in general; from " hence it will follow, that any perſon, " judging it to be thus *expedient*, is as " effectually *warranted* in being a *Mur-* " *derer*, as another can poſſibly be in " being a *Self-Murderer*." The *ground* of the Law therefore being equally *againſt* both, the *Law itſelf* muſt equally *condemn* both.

SHOULD it be ſaid, that the Murder, intended in the Text, is forbidden on account of the *vaſt*, the *irreparable injury* done to a *Fellow-mortal*; who with reſpect to the *rights* of *Human Nature* (one of the chief of which is the *right* to *life* not juſtly *forfeited*) muſt be upon an abſolute foot of *equality* with *every other* Member of the univerſal collective

lective body of Mankind: I anſwer that even this does not make the two Caſes *unſimilar*. In the *principal* point, the *unequitable* and *unauthoritative* deſtruction of the life of a Man, they both agree: "Which is the *ſingle* conſideration that "conſtitutes the *crime* of *Murder*; and "all others are only *circumſtances*, relating to the different *aggravations* of the "guilt of the Murder committed. And "to *Families*, the miſchiefs are the ſame; "to the *Public*, the ſame." To which let me add, that "the moſt *explicite* "reaſon againſt *Murder* in the whole "doctrine of revelation — *For in the* Gen. iv. 6. "*Image of God made he Man* — concludes with equal force againſt *Self-*"*Murder*: For the Self-Murderer being "*a Man*, muſt have been originally "formed in the *Image* of God, or *Mankind*, univerſally conſidered, cannot "*deſerve* to be repreſented under that "Character." SERM. VI.

THUS have I intermixed arguments, drawn from *natural* principles of truth, with reaſonings on the ſenſe and meaning

of

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of *revelation*, that they may mutually illuſtrate and ſtrengthen each other, and *unite* their influence. And though I think what has been already ſuggeſted fully ſufficient to *reſtrain* and *deter* from an action, which our very make and conſtitution *abhors*; yet I ſhall briefly add ſome other Topics, from whence the impiety and evil of it may be more plainly demonſtrated. — As that Mankind are placed, *here*, in a *probationary* ſtate which they *are not* and *cannot* be, from the *dependent* condition of their Nature, at liberty to *deſert*. " For a ſtate of *mo-*
" *ral diſcipline* neceſſary implies in the
" very idea of it, that the ſupreme and
" univerſal governor of Mankind has
" the *abſolute* and *ſole* right, not only to
" appoint the *place* of this diſcipline, but
" to determine the *duration* of it. For,
" otherwiſe, his *creatures* and *ſubjects*
" muſt be *exempt* from his *juriſdiction*,
" any farther than their own *imperfect*
" and *ſuperficial reaſon*, or *paſſions* uſur-
" ping the *ſeat* of reaſon, ſhall allow it
" to be *properly* and *wiſely* exerciſed."

This

This was repreſented in the Heathen Philoſophy, by a very ſignificant and expreſſive metaphor, "that of a *Cen-* "*tinel*'s deſerting his *poſt* without *or-* "*ders*; for which he ought to ſuf- "fer an *exemplary puniſhment*; be- "cauſe, without it, *no command* can "be maintained." SERM. VI.

AGAIN, it may be farther argued, "that no Man *has*, or *can* have, the *full* "and *independent* right of *diſpoſal* with "reſpect to *his own* life. *Society*, his *Fa-* "*mily*, and *all thoſe* who are more par- "ticularly intruſted to his *care*, have *a* "*claim* in it." He cannot, as was obſerved before, make over that right of diſpoſal to *another*; as he *might* do if it was an *abſolute* right, and *eſſentially* belonging to him as *a Man*: "Nor could "he ever be *retained* under the *govern-* "*ment* and *diſcipline* of God himſelf, "ſhould ſuch a right be *allowed*."

AND let me obſerve, beſides all this, that *Self-Murder* though it be ſo aggravated a crime, and repugnant to all the principles of natural and revealed religion,

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gion, "is a ſin that can *never* be repented "of till *repentance* is *unavailable*;" and that there have been *ſcarce* any Examples of it, where the violent Murderer has ſhewn, in general, a *real* ſenſe of piety, or any *conſiſtent* appearances of virtue. *Cato*, I know, is *applauded* as a perſon of moſt *blameleſs* and *illuſtrious* morals: But what was his *profeſſion!* What were his principles! "Thoſe of "a *Stoick*; which was a Sect that pro- "feſſed a *proud*, *ſtiff*, *arrogant*, and *un-* "*amiable* virtue, and an *extravagant un-* "*natural* contempt of *pain* and *death*." And in *him*, Self-Murder ſeems rather to have proceeded "from a *haughty diſdain* "of ſubmitting to a *Conqueror*, and ac- "knowledging a *Superior* and *Lord* in "*Rome*, than from any diſintereſted and "generous ſentiment." And to leave, for the preſent, *religion* quite out of the argument, "he would have acted a part "much more *becoming* the Character of "a *Patriot*, a Man of *true courage* and "*invincible reſolution*; if, inſtead of diſ- "piriting and diſtreſſing his *Friends*, and "aban-

" abandoning the *Public* to ruin, he had GREATLY *dared* to *live*, and *reſerved* " himſelf for *future ſervice* to his Coun- " try." SERM. VI.

As his character is *now* tranſmitted down to us, it is obſcured and debaſed by ſtrong appearances of *a ſullen pride*; of *impotency* of mind, that was unable to ſupport itſelf under diſappointed hopes, and the reverſes of fortune; of a *ſtubborn* ſpirit, unyielding to the ſuggeſtions of nature, nor duly awed by the regards due to the ſupreme governing mind; and of a temper too *ſelf-centered*, and *negligent* of the *common good*. " *Cato* was *great* in many inſtances of his " conduct; but when the *ſtrength* of his " mind was called out to *combat* with his " *predominant* paſſion—*then* he *fell*." And his *mean* example of *dying* eſpecially (ſo much beneath the dignity of a philoſopher and of a man) a *Chriſtian* ſhould *diſdain* to imitate, whoſe religion inculcates thoſe infinitely more ſublime and generous maxims than appear to have influenced *Cato*'s morality—*viz.* " neither to *fear*, nor to " *court*, death; to be neither *raſh*, nor *pu-* " *ſillanimous*; to *ſuffer* with firmneſs and " intre-

SERM. VI. " intrepidity; to reſolve for the good of " mankind, and 'till *providence itſelf* " cloſes the ungrateful ſcene, to ſtand " our ground as illuſtrious *examples* of a " *depreſſed*, *conflicting*, *triumphant* virtue; " and, in a word, to wait the regular " *ſummons* of *nature*, which is the only " authentic *call* of *heaven*, to quit the " the *trials* of the preſent life, and enter " upon the rewards and honours of im- " mortality."

SERMON VII.

On the Example, and moral Character of CHRIST.

1 PET. ii. 21.

—Leaving us an example, that ye ſhould follow his ſteps.

THE examples of great and illuſtrious perſons, who were eminent for ſuperior degrees of moral goodneſs, and for the purity, ſtrength, and ſublimity of their virtues, have in almoſt all ages of the World been held in high veneration; and it has been thought of conſiderable *ſervice* to the cauſe of *virtue*, as well as a *reſpect*

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reſpect due to the memories of thoſe who have excelled in it, to propoſe ſuch uncommon, ſuch noble and uſeful characters, as a proper *pattern* for the reſt of Mankind to imitate. And for this there is an evident foundation in *reaſon*, and in the frame of *Human Nature*. For it is undeniable from experience, that the *force* of good examples is much more univerſally felt, than that of the wiſeſt precepts, or the moſt exact and accurate reaſonings: They not only *inſtruct* but powerfully *perſuade*; they excite *admiration*, inſpire *reſolution*, work upon the inward *native* ſenſe of *ingenuity*, and charm and animate it to *exalted* and *divine* improvements. Were we to have the moſt elaborate draught of moral excellence preſented to us in *ſpeculation* only, we ſhould be apt to eſteem it as *a fine picture*, and be ſtruck, perhaps, with the *beauties* and *graces* of it; but might think it, at the ſame time, wrought up to a *romantic* ſtrain, and too *ſublime* to be copied in real life. But when we ſee it as it were *ſubſtantiated*, and are fully convinced that it has been actually exhibited in *living*

Charac-

Characters, the ground of *deſpondency* and *inactivity* is removed; a worthy *emulation* is excited; and we ourſelves are not only *prompted*, but *encouraged*, to excell. SERM. VII.

As for the Example which the Text ſpeaks of, and which Chriſtianity has called us to imitate, it is by far the moſt *high* and *noble* that was ever propoſed to the World: As the Perſon who ſet it was, both in *office* and original dignity, the *firſt* and *chief* of Men; being indeed, before his incarnation, at the head of all the *angelical* powers; and voluntarily condeſcending to aſſume *our Nature*, for this among ſeveral other moſt wiſe and gracious purpoſes, that he might go before us as our *Pattern* and *Conductor* in the paths of virtue and piety. And the Example of Chriſt contains more *ample inſtruction* in it than any other, and is adapted to all *ranks* and *ſtations* in human life, as it abounds both with *common* and *univerſal*, and with more *extraordinary* and *heroic* virtues; it is an Example of *unſpotted innocence*, and therfore, when rightly underſtood, an unerring and inva-

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riable *rule:* And finally it is an Example that is peculiarly *perſuaſive*, calculated to impreſs our minds, and determine and influence our conduct — being that of the *Author* of our Religion, of our amiable and compaſſionate *Saviour*, of the greateſt *benefactor* and *friend* to Mankind. We ought therefore, though we can never hope to conform *perfectly* to it, to aim at as near a *reſemblance* of it as is poſſible, from every motive of *decency*, *gratitude*, and *intereſt*. "By this we ſhall adorn "the *Chriſtian name*, render it glorious, "and the object of delight and veneration; whereas when it is debaſed and "ſullied by *vice*, by a *low irregular brutal* life quite the reverſe of the *pure* "and *ſublime* life of Chriſt, it is a *vain* "and *inſignificant diſtinction* in itſelf, the "*jeſt* of the licentious and prophane, "and the *ſcorn* of the ſober infidel."

BUT then, on the other hand, it muſt be remember'd, that there are certain *general rules* neceſſary to be obſerved in the imitation of *all* examples; and eſpecially of *ſuch* as *tranſcend* common life, and are adorned and heighten'd by *great*

and

and *extraordinary* actions.—It is abſo- SERM.
lutely neceſſary, in the *firſt* place, in or- VII.
der to our forming a juſt eſtimate of *particular actions*, that we carefully examine into the true *ſprings* and *occaſions* of them, and conſider the *ſituation* and *character* of the agent, and the *views* and *motives* by which he was directed and governed; becauſe without this it is impoſſible for us to know, in ſeveral caſes at leaſt, whether they actually *deſerve* and demand our imitation, or, indeed, whether they are *right* and *fit* in themſelves. The very *ſame inſtances* of outward conduct, as they are differently *circumſtanced*, and flow from different *principles*, may be either eminently wiſe, or as notoriouſly *abſurd*; *moral* or *irregular*; proofs of a rational and ſober *piety*, or marks of a heated and blind *enthuſiaſm*. And, therefore, unleſs this point be fixed with a tolerable degree of exactneſs and good judgment, we may happen entirely to *deſert*, or however widely to *vary from*, the *pattern* which we pretend moſt ſtrictly to copy after, even when the *external behaviour* is, in both, the ſame.

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FROM hence we are naturally led to another rule, and that is, that in following Examples which are propoſed to us, and moſt of all *diſtinguiſhed* and *ſingular* examples, we endeavout to find out *thoſe parts* which are more immediately *adapted* to our own condition, to our abilities, rank, and employments, and the relative ſtations, in which the all wiſe Providence of the ſupreme diſpoſing mind has thought fit to place us. For beſides *thoſe* virtues which are immutably and univerſally *eſſential* to a good character, and ſuch as are directly *ſuited* to the peculiar relations which we ourſelves ſuſtain, we ſhall probably, upon reflection, find ſome *other* parts, to which we are not *capable* of attaining: And to attempt *theſe* may be as injurious and unbecoming, as the diſcharging our *proper* obligations, and the duties of religion that bind *invariably* in *all* circumſtances, is benefical and praiſeworthy. And as it will, I believe, plainly appear, if we conſider the ſubject impartially, that theſe *peculiarities* relate not, in moſt caſes, to the *habit* and inward *temper* of piety and moral rectitude,

but

but chiefly to the outward *expreſſions* and *demonſtrations* of it; muſt upon this account it be highly expedient for us, with reſpect to ſuch ſhining Examples as we find within us a generous and aſpiring *emulation* to reſemble, to make a diſtinction between the *general Character*, and the *particular actions* that illuſtrate and diſplay that character. For the *latter* may be *extraordinary* inſtances above our capacity, and too *ſublime* for vulgar imitation; while the *former* is of ſuch a kind, as *every Man* has it in his *power* to cultivate, and carry to a conſiderable degree of perfection. And this remark is not confined to *entire Characters*, but may be extended to all the *ſingle virtues* of which they are compoſed; by whoſe *united* luſtre and influence it is, that they are *completely* formed, and rendered *amiable* and *reſplendent* patterns of moral beauty and dignity. — Thus the *habit* and *temper* of piety, of generoſity, of benevolence and mercy, may be *imitable* in *all* Examples, be they ever ſo great and excellent; but it is obvious to the common ſenſe and experience of Mankind, that

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SERM. VII. there are *ſome acts* of piety, ſome *expreſſions* of benevolence, ſome *diſcoveries* and *proofs* of a generous and merciful diſpoſition, that cannot be *univerſally* imitated: So that the *inward*, i. e. the *true* and *proper*, Character may be *one* and the *ſame*; even when there is a neceſſity, in the nature of things, that it ſhould *ſhew* itſelf in very *different* inſtances. And this can never appear in a ſtronger light, than by applying it to the moſt *holy* and *finiſhed* Example of the bleſſed Author of our Religion. To endeavour to be *like* him in a conſtant and ardent *propenſity* to do good, and in *a life* of the moſt exalted and extenſive uſefulneſs, is the *eternal duty* of *all* his diſciples; but to *perform* preciſely the *ſame* beneficient actions, to communicate relief and happineſs, to reform the errors and vices of the World, in the *ſame extraordinary* way in which he did it, theſe things can conſtitute *no part* of *our* moral obligations, becauſe they are in our preſent circumſtances abſolutely *impoſſible*. And, in many other caſes, unleſs we take care to maintain the *like* juſt *diſtinction*, and, by that means, acquire

acquire a right notion of *what it is*, we are obliged to copy, in the pious and moral Example of our adorable Saviour, our Religion muſt run into *extravagance*; and our virtues, inſtead of being reaſonable and attractive, will be juſtly cenſured as abſurd and unnatural *affectation*. SERM. VII.

I SHALL only add one preliminary obſervation more, which is this, that the moſt bright and juſtly celebrated Examples of virtue are likely to make the moſt *ſenſible* and *deep* impreſſion, when they are *diſtinctly* illuſtrated. The *general* excellence, of the *whole* Character taken together, may appear *great* and *admirable*; but our eſteem and veneration of it will of courſe *increaſe* and be better *eſtabliſhed*, when we ſee it repreſented in *a variety* of agreeable lights; and the *uſes* of it will be *accommodated*, with leſs danger of error and greater eaſe, to the *various* ſcenes and conditions of human life. For as in our *inquiries* into the works of nature, the *farther* we go in unravelling the curious texture of their parts, their properties and uſes, their ſtupendous form as branches of the general ſyſtem, their

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connection with and dependence on each other, and ſubſerviency to the common grand deſign of order, harmony, and the communication of happineſs; as, I ſay, the more *exact* we are in theſe *inquiries*, our *wonder* and *delight* are greatly heightned, and the more *enlarged idea* we have of the exquiſite conſtitution of the univerſe, and the boundleſs perfection of its infinite author: So it is likewiſe with reſpect to *moral examples*. The conſideration of their *general propriety* and *rectitude* is but an inadequate and ſuperficial view, in compariſon of that which muſt be opened to us, by a diſtinct diſplay of their *particular beauties* and *excellencies*— I ſhall therefore purſue this method in the following diſcourſe, and endeavour, with reverence and humble admiration, to delineate the ſeveral perfections, that were eminently exemplified in the life of Chriſt; not preſuming that I ſhall be able to do *ſtrict juſtice* to the fair and unſpotted original; but hoping, however, to give ſuch *a tranſcript* of it, as may be adapted to warm our more *refined* and *generous* affections, to inſpire an *honourable*

rable opinion of Chriſt and his religion, a *love* of virtue for its intrinſic divine excellence, and more *vigorous reſolutions* to improve in it. SERM. VII.

THE *firſt* thing, that I ſhall propoſe, is the example of our bleſſed Saviour's *piety*; "which was indeed *ſublime* and *fervent*, "but yet, in all the expreſſions of it, "*diſcreet* and *temperate*; being *founded* "in reaſon and the immutable law of all "derived and dependent natures, and en-"tirely *regulated* and *guided* by it." I chuſe to begin with *this*, becauſe it ſhone ſo brightly, and with ſuch a ſuperior and excelling luſtre, in the life of Chriſt, and appears to have been, as it were, the *vital* and *animating* principle throughout his whole character; and becauſe it is, in itſelf, the *firſt* and *ſupreme* obligation incumbent on *mankind*, and on all *intelligent* and *moral* creatures.—In the opinion of many indeed, who would be ranked with the moſt *diſcerning*, piety ſeems not to be a *neceſſary ingredient* in great and examplary characters. In ſome of the moſt *applauded*, eſpecially in *modern* times, there are found but *few* and *ſlight* traces of

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of it. And yet I can, I think, ſcarce conceive of any truth, that is more demonſtrable and obvious to human reaſon than this, that there can be no ſuch thing as a ſtrictly *moral*, and ſurely then not a *finiſhed* character, while the duties of *piety* are entirely neglected. It may indeed have a *partial* dignity, and be juſtly celebrated for its *other* diſtinguiſhed and uſeful qualities; but the want of *this* is ſo fundamental a defect, that it muſt, at leaſt, *tarniſh* and *obſcure* all the reſt of its boaſted excellencies.—For is it *natural* to the mind of man to acknowledge and honour real merit, and cannot refuſe to adore *infinite rectitude?* Can it ſincerely admire *lower characters* of virtue, and not be charmed with that of the *beſt* of all Beings? can it love, and be ſtruck with, a *confined* and *defective* goodneſs, and not find its contemplations *raiſed*, and its affections *warmly excited*, by a goodneſs that is *unbounded* and *immutable?* Can it approve of *gratitude*, and not be *grateful* to the eternal ſource of mercy? Such a conduct as this muſt fail in *eſſential* points; and has neither *fitneſs* nor *conſiſtency* to recommend

commend it. For the duties of *piety* are, properly ſpeaking, nothing elſe but the exerciſe of *reſpect*, *love*, and *gratitude* to the ſupreme Being; which, if they are *moral* and *unalterable* obligations with reſpect to our *fellow creatures*, muſt deſerve, *much more*, to be improved and cultivated with reſpect to him, who is the *gracious* and *univerſal creator*. This therefore is the natural, the inevitable, concluſion from the whole—that it is altogether as impoſſible, in *reaſon*, that there ſhould ever be a truly *noble* and *complete* character without lively ſentiments of *devotion* and *piety* towards God; as it is that any character ſhould be *amiable*, without *juſtice*, *clemency*, and *generoſity* to men. SERM. VII.

BUT *both theſe*, which are in the nature of things inſeparably linked together, were *illuſtriouſly* diſplayed in our bleſſed Saviour's example: And it was this *union*, and admirable *harmony*, of all the moral virtues, which give it ſuch a tranſcendent and incomparable glory, that all other examples ſink and fade before it. This perfect pattern of all moral rectitude ever main-

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maintained and cultivated the moſt *raiſed* and *honourable* apprehenſions of God, and lived in an *habitual reverence* of his underived and independent glory and majeſty, his boundleſs dominion, his ſupreme authority; and under an *efficacious* and *invigorating ſenſe* of *his own* conſtant dependence upon him. "The *piety* of the "Saviour of the World was *free* and *ge-* "*nerous*; not a homage paid to a *tyrant*, "but to the *Father* and *friend* of man- "kind." It appears to have been a *ſteddy* and *uniform* principle, from all his diſcourſes; from his frequent *occaſional* addreſſes to the Deity in prayer and praiſe; as well as from his more *uncommon* and *intenſe* devotions. He gave continual and daily proofs of an ardent *zeal* for the *honour* of God; or, in other words, "for "promoting the right knowledge of his "*perfections* and *laws*, and an exact and "univerſal *reſemblance* of him." He thought it his *meat to do the will of him that ſent him* into the world, *and to finiſh his work*; i. e. "it was the *refreſhment*, "the *delight*, of his mind, infinitely ſu- "perior to the falſe adulterate gratifica-

John iv. 34.

"tions

" tions of ſenſual exceſs and luxury, to ſupport honourably his *place* and *rank* " in the univerſe, and execute the *orders* " of infinite wiſdom." And being convinced, that *it* was neceſſarily determined by the *beſt* and moſt *important* reaſons, he ever preſerved that *calm*, *humble*, and *ſublimely rational* temper as to be able to ſay; " I not only eſteem myſelf *con-* " *ſtrained* by the *duty* which I owe to a *ſuperior*, but *I delight to do thy* will *O my God.*" A very illuſtrious inſtance of his command over mutinous and rebellious paſſions, we find in the laſt and moſt *diſtreſsful* ſcene of his life. For though *Nature* was ſhocked, and expreſſed a ſtrong reluctance, at the proſpect of undeſerved ſcorn and indignity, and of the ſhame, tortures, and horrors of a violent and ignominious death; yet he ſtill preſerved his *conſtancy*, and *invincible temper* of *reſignation*: *O my Father*, ſays he, *if it be poſſible, let this cup paſs from me; nevertheleſs, not as I will, but as thou wilt.* Matt. xxvi. 39.

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BUT perhaps it will be thought, that the *agony* and *conſternation*, under which

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our Saviour laboured, and by which he was ſo much *oppreſſed*, is very ſurpriſing and unaccountable, conſidering the *greatneſs* of his perſon and the unblemiſhed *innocence* of his life. This, it may be ſaid, was ſurely a *weakneſs* in him, and a *diſhonour* to his character; ſince many *common* men have met *death*, in all its forms of terror, not only without that *confuſion*, and *diſconſolate anxiety* of mind, which he expreſſed, but with an *intrepid* and *invincible reſolution*. — To which it is obvious to reply, that this *dejectedneſs* and *diſtreſs* of mind, which is thought ſo ſtrange and wonderful, and, in ſome meaſure, diſgraceful to the character of Chriſt, "might ariſe from *a conjunction* "of ſeveral circumſtances, which pro- "duced the effect *mechanically*; without "any, the leaſt, reflection on his *moral* "*Example*." It may be preſumed to have ſprang, very much, from *natural conſtitution* of *body*; nor is this, at all, an *abſurd* and *foreign* ſuppoſition, when we are expreſſly told that, as a Man, he *was in all things made like unto his Brethren*; and, of conſequence, muſt have

Heb. ii. 17.

have been neceſſarily expoſed to the general *infirmities* and *temptations*, which attend human Nature. And this *conſtitutional* diſpoſition, ſubject to ſtrong impreſſions of *fear*, might perhaps be aided and ſtrengthened by his reflecting on — the *ill ſucceſs* of his heavenly miſſion; the *ſtubborn* and almoſt *deſperate* incredulity of the *Jewiſh* Nation; their *ingratitude* in offering ſuch heinous indignity to him, whoſe life had been one continued ſcene of *beneficence*, of a noble *concern* and *effort* to promote their higheſt intereſt: And, conſequently, the diſtreſs of his mind (which, increaſing the *inbred averſion* of Human Nature to a violent and diſgraceful Death, produced his moſt *ſtupendous* agony,) might ſpring in a great meaſure from *the love* of his *Country*, and a tender *compaſſion* for its unhappy ſtate. Others, again, ſuppoſe, that it might be occaſioned, or at leaſt heightned, by *præternatural* cauſes, and particularly, by the influence of evil Miniſters to diſturb and terrify the *imagination*; upon which account, they think, it was, that good Angels were ſent from Heaven, after his

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virtue had *ſuſtained* this *arduous* conflict, to *raiſe* and *comfort* him. But which way ſoever we determine about theſe things, moſt certain it is, that his *extraordinary* terror, at the apprehenſion of an ignominious and tormenting Death, is ſo far from being an objection againſt the *ſtrength* of his *piety*, that it is rather a more *full* and *bright* illuſtration of "it: For the *greater* his dread of "Death was, *proportionably greater* muſt "the force of his *religious reverence* of "God be, to controul and diſpel it." And, perhaps, this dark ſcene might be wiſely ordered, in the courſe of providence, with *this* among other views; "to give us *an unqueſtionable Example* of "the ſurpriſing effect of a rooted habi-"tual piety, to *ſupport* the mind in *ex-*"*treme exigencies*, and render it *unconque-*"*rable* by the moſt *formidable trials.*—"

To conclude this head; the religious Example, which Chriſt has in our own Nature propoſed and ſet before, "is an "*eaſy* and *imitable* Example, free from "*unnatural* and *extravagant* raptures and "tranſports. It does not conſiſt in *me-*

"*chanical*

" *chanical impulſes* and *variable fervors* of devotion; in *ſuperſtitious auſterities* and *enthuſiaſtical viſions* and *intercourſes* with God; but in worſhipping the *Father* of the Univerſe *in Spirit* and *in Truth*, with an *enlightened* underſtanding, and a *ſerene* and *purified* Conſcience. The *fruits* of it were — *zeal* regulated by *knowledge*, and tempered with *humanity* and *compaſſion*; the practice of *virtue* in all it branches; *humility*, *contentment*, *ſobriety*, the love of *mankind*, and a delight in *doing good?* It was not *reſerved* and *unſociable*, but familiar and affable; and aimed at this as its *ultimate* end — to promote the *glory* of the infinite Creator by the *moral rectitude*, the private and public, the preſent and eternal *happineſs*, of his *intelligent*, which are the *nobleſt* of his Creatures." SERM. VII.

I MUST crave your patience, while I ſuggeſt one inſtance more of our Saviour's *piety*, which I have not hitherto touched upon; but it ought by no means to be omitted, becauſe it will afford ſeveral per-

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tinent and uſeful obſervations, directly ſuited *to the ſtate of Chriſtianity* in theſe preſent times. The Author of our Religion, while he converſed with Men here on earth, was not only conſtant, at all *fit* ſeaſons, in *meditation* and *private prayer*; but regularly and ſeriouſly attended the ſolemn offices of *public devotion*; and particularly it was, in his opinion, "an *eſſential* proof of the reſpect "due to Almighty God, to acknowledge "his authority in the appointment of *po-* "*ſitive* laws, as well as by a ſtrict ob- "ſervation of thoſe which are *unchange-* "*able* and *moral*." It was upon *this* principle, that he thought himſelf obliged to ſubmit to *John*'s baptiſm. And therefore when *John*, who was a miniſter of God far *inferior* and entirely *ſubſervient* to him being commiſſioned only as a *preparatory* meſſenger, to open the way for the introduction of his mild and glorious reign, or as a *herald*, to proclaim to the *Jewiſh* Nation the coming of their King; when *John*, I ſay, made *a ſcruple* of performing the office of baptiſm

tiſm for one who was advanced ſo vaſtly above him; the Son of God, notwithſtanding his *ſuperior* character and the *conſummate* rectitude of his Nature, would not be *diverted* from diſcharging *an obligation* which he thought *indiſpenſably* incumbent on HIM: *For thus*, ſays he, *it becometh us to fulfil* ALL *righteouſneſs*. SERM. VII. Matt. iii. 15.

AND what *excuſes*, now, that are *plauſible*, and carry the leaſt diſtant *colour* of reaſon, can any of *us* invent, for *depretiating* and neglecting laws of the very *ſame kind* under the *Chriſtian* inſtitution, with *that* which our Lord himſelf ſo remarkably *honoured*, and hath in ſo forcible a manner recommended to our eſteem and veneration, by *his own Example*? "We ſhall not, ſurely, pretend, that "the holy *rites* of our religion are *ſigns* "and *emblems*, that can be of *no uſe* but "to the *vulgar*, the weakneſs of whoſe "reaſon muſt be *aided*, and their affec-"tions *raiſed*, by *ſenſible* images; but "that we are too *wiſe*, and our notions "of things too *juſt* and *refined*, to receive "any real improvement from ſuch *de-*

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prevent *contempt* from being thrown on *any one* of the Divine Laws, which, by a too eaſy tranſition, would devolve upon *all the reſt*. " For as every *act* of *obe-* " *dience*, by the eſtabliſhed *conſtitution*, " and the *laws* that take place with re- " ſpect to the human mind, muſt ſtreng- " then the *habit* of obedience; ſo on the " other hand, according to the fixed and " and invariable progreſs and courſe of " *habits*, *repeated* inſtances of *diſobedi-* " *ence*, even to laws that are in their in- " tention *inferior* and *ſubordinate*, muſt " directly lead to the ſame wrong con- " duct in *groſſer* and more *heinous* caſes; " and may therefore at length, by gra- " dual advances, proceed to an open vio- " lation, if not an avowed contempt, of " the *immutable duties* of *natural* reli- " gion, as well as the *peculiar inſtitutions* " of *revealed*." — In what I have ſaid under this head, I muſt be ſuppoſed to addreſs myſelf to *Chriſtians* only; who will find themſelves miſerably embarraſ- ſed, if they endeavour to reconcile their *neglect* of plain and acknowledged pre-

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cepts of the Chriſtian Religion, with the *principles* which they publicly profeſs, or with their maintaining a *conſiſtent* and *honourable* character. Suffer me juſt to add, that as the *obligation* of *poſitive* duties derives itſelf, *entirely*, from the *will* of the ſupreme Legiſlator *expreſſly* declared: it from hence neceſſarily follows, that the *primitive model* of inſtitution, ought to be conſcientiouſly and *ſtrictly* adhered to. "To *annul* the law altogether, is a "direct oppoſition to the authority of "God; to *alter*, ſo far as the alteration "extends, is the ſame as to *annul:*" So that no pretence of greater *propriety*, nor any plea of *inconvenience*, can ever juſtify our ſubſtituting *a human ordinance* (whether in *whole*, or in *part*) in the place of *a Divine*. "There are cir-"cumſtances to be ſuppoſed, in which "the *obſervance* of it may, for a time "at leaſt, be *omitted*, with perfect in-"nocence; but *none*, wherein, with-"out groſs arrogance and ſuperſtition, "we can preſume to *mend* it." The *reaſon* of the thing is clear and ſtrong againſt

againſt all ſuch *innovations*, as well as our Lord's *Example*: — The excellencies of which will be more largely illuſtrated in my next Diſcourſe.

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SERMON VII.

On the Example, and moral Character of CHRIST.

1 PET. ii. 21.

—Leaving us an example, that ye ſhould follow his ſteps.

PIETY, and univerſal *Virtue* and good *Morality*, are, by the natural connection and order of things, abſolutely *inſeparable*. For all the *rules* of moral goodneſs being eternal *laws* of God, and many of them tranſcribed, as it were, from his own *eſſential perfections*; the allowed and habitual neglect of *any* of them muſt,

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SERM. VIII. muſt, of neceſſity, be inconſiſtent both with the juſt eſteem of his *lovely* and *excellent character*, and with a ſincere regard and ſubmiſſion to his *authority*. Nor can it ever be imagined, without the moſt manifeſt abſurdity, that the ſupreme *wiſdom* of the infinite mind will think it *ſufficient* for us to practice thoſe *outward reſpects* and *honours*, which his matchleſs dignity, and the relation we ſtand in to him, demand from us, if we are, at the ſame time, careleſs about diſcharging *other duties*, which he has declared, to be equally *inviolable*, in the very contrivance and frame of our nature; or live in the omiſſion of thoſe *neceſſary offices* which muſt be of perpetual obligation, as long as the *various relations* continue to take place (*eſtabliſhed* by his Wiſdom and Power, and throughout all ages maintained between the ſeveral parts of his Creation. Such a ſuppoſition as this would plainly infer, that the great and all-perfect Deity is in reality neither *perfect*, nor *truly great*; or, in other words, that he is more concerned for the mere *pomp* of *ſupremacy*, and uſeleſs *compliments* offer'd

fer'd to himſelf, than for rectitude of *temper*, or integrity of *moral conduct*; and that for the ſake of flattering praiſes and ſervile addreſſes, he will *diſpenſe* with his own laws. But of all the *moral* virtues, there is none more intimately connected with the genuine ſpirit and proper duties of *piety*, than univerſal *benevolence* and *mercy*.—For if we reverence the authority of God, *that* has enjoined and enforced it upon us; if we honour his *example*, in *that* we find it moſt amiably and glorioufly diſplay'd; the *nature*, which *he* has given us, ſtrongly inclines and prompts us to it; and *his creatures*, whoſe happineſs he ſincerely deſires, are the *objects* of it. SERM. VIII.

FROM the conſideration of our Saviour's piety, we, therefore, naturally proceed to contemplate his *benevolence*, his *lively* and *unconquerable* benevolence. This is the virtue, that, above any other, conſtitutes *lovelineſs* of character; and it is, withal, the inſeparable *companion* of true greatneſs of mind. And, with reſpect to this generous and *God-like* virtue, the example of Chriſt deſerves a very particular

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attention, and to be admired and celebrated with the higheſt *applauſes*. It may be extremely ſerviceable for our direction, as to the excellent *nature*, the great *importance*, the immutable *neceſſity* of univerſal Love and Charity: It may likewiſe be peculiarly ſerviceable to *warm* and *animate* every *kind* and *friendly* affection, that *nature* hath implanted within us; to extirpate all the *ſeeds* of *baſe* and *ſelfiſh* paſſions; to inſpire a *diſintereſted*, *ſteddy*, *diffuſive*, goodneſs; and a generous unextinguiſhable *ardour* and *delight* in beneficent actions.

FOR, in the firſt place, our Lord has plainly ſhewn us, and repreſented it to us, in the ſtrongeſt light, by ſeveral remarkable inſtances in his own life, "that "the external obſervances and duties of "*piety* ought, upon no occaſions, to be "ſuffered to interfere with the neceſſary "offices of *humanity* to our fellow-crea-"tures." He made no ſcruple of *helping* and *relieving* the diſtreſſed, and acting, *publicly*, the part of a *friend* and noble *benefactor* to mankind on the *Sabbath-day*; tho' the prejudiced and ſu-

PERSTI-

PERSTITIOUS *Jews* had ſo far extinguiſhed *the light of Nature*, that they cenſured and condemned this conduct as a monſtrous height of *prophaneneſs*, and an oppen violation of the expreſs *command* and *law* of God relating to the *Sabbath*. But the Son of God being infallibly aſſured, that his Father could not be more *honoured* than by *imitating* his moſt amiable perfections, and having his heart inflexibly intent on *doing good*, (which he knew was one main end of all *inſtituted* religion) choſe rather to expoſe himſelf to the inſolent ſcorn and perſecutions of *ignorant bigots* and *deſigning hypocrites*, "than to raiſe to himſelf a *falſe*, "but *ſplendid*, character for *devotion* "and *piety*, by making a ſacrifice to "it of *humanity* and *mercy*." He ſaw it to be an eternal dictate of *Nature*, as well as that it was expreſſly revealed by one of the ancient *Prophets*, that God would have *mercy* rather than *ſacrifice*; and gave ſuch other ſolid and undeniable proofs, of the *rectitude* and *honour* of his conduct, taken both from Reaſon and Scripture, that his Adverſaries were totally

Hoſ. vi. 6.

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ly *confounded*; though at the ſame time, as it generally happens with thoroughly *perverſe* and *incorrigible* tempers, their *prejudices* were *heightened*. So that throughout the whole of theſe tranſactions, of which ſeveral are diſtinctly mentioned in the Evangelical Hiſtory, both the *wiſdom* of Chriſt, and the exalted *goodneſs* and *generoſity* of his diſpoſition, are glorioufly and with a *united luſtre* exemplified.

AND if we review the particulars of our bleſſed Saviour's *benevolence*, we ſhall find it to be, in *all*, *noble* and truly *divine*. To do good was the conſtant *employment*, the principal *buſineſs*, of his life. His very *retirements*, his *meditations*, his *prayers* were in a great meaſure devoted to the moſt ſubſtantial happineſs of mankind: But his *public converſe*, with the World, was almoſt one entire ſcene of kind and uſeful offices. Wherever he appeared, *eaſe* and *joy* were his conſtant attendants. He recovered ſpeech to the *dumb*, ſight to the *blind*, the calm and regular uſe of reaſon to the *diſtempered* in *mind*; reſtored thoſe to the *privileges* of *ſociable* creatures, who, for *foul* and *loath-*

loathſome diſeaſes, were excluded from human ſociety; and relieved the *ſorrows* of tender parents and affectionate relatives, by miraculouſly raiſing their *Children* and *Friends* from the dead. In a word, the far greater part even of his *extraordinary* operations were, like the *fixed* and *conſtant* temper and habit of his mind, friendly to all objects that preſented themſelves, and ſcattered the bleſſings of *health* and *peace* all around him. — But great and Godlike as all this may appear, the benevolence of Chriſt had a far *nobler* aim, and took a much *wider* and more *extended* ſcope. His *chief view* was to inſtruct the ignorant, and reform the erroneous and vicious, to eſtabliſh truth, and promote univerſal virtue and rectitude of life; and, conſequently, to advance the *ſupreme honour* and *endleſs felicity* of *reaſonable* Beings. For *this* he underwent innumerable *fatigues*; with a view to *this* he directed all his *ſtudies*, and was fearleſs of *reproach* or *danger*; and at laſt, the more effectually to accompliſh this *high* and *grand* deſign, he *freely*, and with an *heroic greatneſs* of mind,

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SERM. VIII. mind, conſented to ſubmit to *death*. So that he may be properly ſaid to have died a Martyr for the *univerſal* good, the *ſupreme* and *everlaſting* good, of mankind: "And thus, his benevolence which, in "the former parts of his life, no *difficulties* could controul, no *ingratitude* re"ſtrain, no *injuries* diſcourage, was *ele*"*vated* to its utmoſt pitch of *perfection* by "triumphing over the *ignominy* and *ter*"*ror* of Death."

AND as, the moſt *humane* and *nobly benevolent* hearts, have always been diſtinguiſhed by a ſtrong ſenſe of *compaſſion*, ſo we find it in the life of Chriſt; in which this tender and generous virtue was moſt admirably diſplayed. It is the property of *little* and *contracted* minds to be hard and inſenſible; but *great* Spirits eaſily melt, and relent at the diſtreſſes of their Fellow-Creatures. To be ſoftened by *benevolent* affections, and diſſolved in *pity*, is an honour to the human mind, but to be diſſolved by the effeminate pleaſures of *luxury* is mere animal paſſion, that depreſſes reaſon and the moral faculties. The latter of theſe therefore, could find

no place in the perfect Example of the Son of God; but the former was glorioufly diſplayed, and ſhone in its utmoſt luſtre. Compaſſion was ſo natural to his *elevated* and *divine* temper, that the moſt *common incidents* of life were ſufficient to raiſe a ſtrong and lively ſenſe of it — And it exerted itſelf towards his moſt determined and inveterate *enemies*. For when, a little before the deſtruction of that blinded and ungrateful City, he beheld *Jeruſalem* at a diſtance, we are informed by the ſacred Hiſtorian, that with the moſt ſenſible and deep concern he *deplored* her unhappy fate, and the deſolation that would ſhortly be brought upon her by the *Roman* arms, as a puniſhment of her unbelief and impenitence.

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ADD to all this, that we find, in the life of Chriſt, a bright Example of the tendereſt affection and ſympathy of *friendſhip*. For when the relations and friends of *Lazarus* were lamenting, and in ſore affliction, at his Death, his Soul immediately took the *impreſſion* of their *grief*, and *Jeſus wept*: Jeſus *wept*, though he knew their *loſs* would ſoon be *repaired*,

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and though he came *determined* to repair it by his miraculous power. —*Jeſus* therefore *wept* not for the *death* of *Lazarus*; but from a mind ſtrongly *ſuſceptible* of *compaſſion*, and that naturally bore *a part* in the *ſighs* and *complaints* of the afflicted. "From whence we learn, that the "*ſoft heart* which eaſily relents, and the "*tear* of *commiſeration* that kindly falls "for the diſtreſſes of others, is one of "the moſt infallible indications of a *ſub-*"*lime* and *great* Spirit, and an orna-"ment to the moſt *exalted* characters." There is indeed ſuch an inward *ſatisfaction*, ſuch a conſciouſneſs of true *dignity* attending it, as is not to be deſcribed. From *pains* of *this* kind ſprings one of the *nobleſt* of all our *pleaſures*,—"So *wiſely* and "*graciouſly* has the God of Nature or-"dained it, that the compunction and "uneaſineſs, which we feel from ſo *ge-*"*nerous* a principle, ſhould not be *un-*"*mixed* ſorrow; but be accompanied "with inward approbation and end in "*Joy*: That, whilſt it is in its *conſe-*"*quences* ſo highly *beneficial* to our *Fel-*"*low-creatures*, we *ourſelves* might not be

" be the only ſufferers by it; nor conſe- SERM.
" quently be tempted to *diſcourage* or *re-* VIII.
" *ſiſt* that *implanted ſenſe* of humanity,
" which is the Orphan's *hope*, and the
" *refuge* of the poor and miſerable."

HITHERTO, then, the Example of our bleſſed Saviour's *benevolence* appears, in all the branches of it, to be extremely natural and beautiful; and to be built, not merely on inſtincts of *Nature*, but on principles of *reaſon* and *religion*. There is ſuch a thing no doubt, in many characters as an uncommon *conſtitutional* tenderneſs and friendlineſs of diſpoſition, and a *peculiar* degree of propenſity to kind and generous actions: And this deſerves to be highly valued as a ſignal privilege of Nature. But to be ſwayed and governed by it, as we may be by any other *mechanical* impulſe, without reflection, and the deliberate judgment and determination of the mind, ſeems to have, in a *moral* ſenſe, very little that is truly praiſe-worthy in it. " For it is poſſible, in
" ſuch caſes as theſe, that a man may be
" *humane* and *compaſſionate* only, or at
" leaſt chiefly, for *ſelf-gratification*;"

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and his kind affections, not being bounded and regulated by a *preſiding intelligent* and *moral* principle, may often times prompt him to communicate *private relief* and pleaſure, againſt all rules of *diſcretion*, and in oppoſition to the *common* good. But when benevolence is directed by *reaſon*, ſprings from *approbation* and *choice*, and is cultivated as *a law* of the Supreme Being, and an unalterable and moſt important branch of the *moral rectitude* of human Nature; it then claims *a rank* among the moſt ſhining and eminent virtues. Then, as in our Saviour's moſt correct and holy Example, it will be *diſintereſted*, *free* and *diffuſive*; compaſſionate without *weakneſs*, and generous beyond *controul*. With reſpect to the *diſpoſition* itſelf it will be large and unconfined, and, in the *exertions* of it, have all the ſcope that is deſireable for the real good of mankind; nor defeat the ultimate *end* of our natural ſentiments of commiſeration and mercy, by converting *private favours* into *public injuries*.

BUT to proceed: Another excellent property of that benevolence and good-

neſs, which ſo illuſtriouſly diſtinguiſhed the life of Chriſt, is, that it was *calm*, *gentle*, and *forgiving*. It could not be irritated, by any provocations, to a deſire of *revenge*, nor be prevailed upon, by the moſt groſs and undeſerved indignities, to attempt a retaliation; but preſerved an entire command over all *reſentful* and *boiſterous* paſſions, and ardently deſired the *happineſs* of the enemy and the perſecutor, whilſt it ſuffered by their *malice*. It was a conſtant maxim with the Son of God, to triumph over the inſolence and injuſtice of his oppreſſors by an uninterrupted courſe of good offices; and conquer his enemies, not by *force*, but by meekneſs, compaſſion, and generoſity. *He* was *brought as a lamb to the ſlaughter, and as a ſheep before her ſhearers is dumb, ſo he opened not his mouth: When he was reviled,* he *reviled not again; when he ſuffered, he threatned not; but committed* himſelf *to him that judgeth righteouſly*. And this branch of his *Example* is, for its extraordinary amiableneſs and dignity, particularly recommended by the Apoſtle *Peter*,

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Iſ. liii. 7.

1 Pet. ii. 23.

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ter, just after the Words of my Text, to the strict imitation of all *Christians*. And, surely, with the highest reason; because it discovers "such a *freedom* and *great-* "*ness* of mind, such an *established* vir- "tue, such a *steady* and *insuppressible* be- "nevolence of temper, as are never "found but in the most raised and *God-* "*like* characters."

BUT the excellency and uncommon lustre of our blessed Saviour's Example, in this respect, will appear in a yet stronger light to excite our esteem and admiration, if we turn our thoughts to *particular instances*. — We shall then find, that the mild and charitable Author of our Religion was a declared enemy to PERSECUTION, and to all methods of *severity* and *violence*, though upon the most plausible and specious pretences. For when two of his Disciples, transported by a *frantic* and *cruel* zeal, proposed to him to command *fire from Heaven* to *destroy* the rude and ungenerous *Samaritans*, who refused him a passage through one of their *villages*, for no other cause but because he was going to *Jerusalem*; and who,

who, beſides the affront which they offered to *him*, and their contempt of his *prophetic character*, were notorious *Apoſtates* from the true Religion, that was revealed and inſtituted by God himſelf: When two of his Diſciples, I ſay, propoſed his revenging himſelf in ſo ſignal a manner on theſe *inhoſpitable*, *ſchiſmatical*, and *apoſtate Samaritans*; he rejected the motion with a noble *reſentment*, and a ſevere *rebuke* of their intemperate zeal, in theſe remarkable Words. — *Ye know not what manner of* Spirit *ye are of: For the Son of Man is not come to* deſtroy *men's lives, but to* ſave *them.* " To *in-* " *jure* any on account of their *diſreſpect* " to him, and for the ſake of their *er-* " *rors* and *corruptions* in *faith* or *wor-* " *ſhip*, was abſolutely repugnant to the " genius of his Religion, and to the uni- " form courſe of his meek and benefic- " ent life." — A clear and unconteſtable proof this, that the Church of *Rome*, which is all over ſtained with *Blood*, and has, for ſo many ages, practiſed the moſt *horrible barbarities* to maintain her unjuſt claims and infinite ſuperſtitions, " is

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Luke ix. 55, 56.

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BUT not to diſturb our thoughts, at this time, with a more particular repreſentation of ſuch *unnatural* and *ſhocking* characters, let us go on to ſurvey a more delightful ſubject, the *lovely* and *admirable* Example of the Friend and Saviour of mankind. — Let us view him when moſt heinouſly *inſulted*, and under the moſt grievous ſcenes of his *diſtreſs* and *ſuffering*, and we ſhall find that "the ſame "*ſweetneſs* of diſpoſition, the ſame *un-*"*ruffled* Spirit of *ſoft* and *mild* benevo-"lence ſtill poſſeſſed him, and triumph-"ed compleatly and gloriouſly over *proud* "and *malignant* paſſions." We all of us feel, that when our honour is ſtained by the rude attacks of *calumny*, when we are unjuſtly *deſpiſed*, and ſuffer groundleſs *abuſe* and *wrong*, through the baſeneſs and ingratitude of the World; it is extremely difficult, and an excellence that few,

few, very few, attain to, to preſerve the *evenneſs* and *compoſure* of our tempers. *Paſſion* is apt to grow *unruly*, and inſpire deſigns of *revenge*; and, in the midſt of this *tumult* within, the voice of *reaſon* is not heard, and the motions of *benevolence* are ſcarcely felt. But if we would accuſtom ourſelves to contemplate, frequently, the *Example* of the Son of God with a becoming ſerioufneſs and veneration, this would be a moſt effectual means to extirpate all the ſeeds of *malice* and *ungoverned reſentment*; and while we *abhorred* the *injury*, it would teach us to maintain humanity and tenderneſs towards the *injurious*. For this Divine Perſon had led an *innocent*, *peaceable*, and *inoffenſive* life; he was conſcious to himſelf of no *views*, but what directly tended to the *good* of mankind; he never gave to any one of his countrymen the leaſt ground for juſt *complaint*; but for his exemplary ſervices to the World deſerved univerſal *love* and *honour*. But when, notwithſtanding all this, he was branded with public *infamy*, apprehended as a notorious *Malefactor*, and his life ſacrificed

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to ſave that of a vile deteſtable *Murderer*; when the Prieſts and leading men of the *Jewiſh* Nation made it an act of *Religion*, and a point of eminent *merit*, to conſpire and procure his *death*; when he was expoſed, with *mock-pageantry*, to the deriſion and rage of the multitude; and, after many *preparatory* indignities, was at length, to glut the inſatiate cruelty of his enemies, devoted to Death, even the Death of *Slaves* and of the worſt of *Criminals* — "Do we find, under all theſe unparal-"leled provocations, that his meekneſs "and univerſal benevolence deſerted him, "and gave him up a prey to *anger* and "*impatience?* Was there ſo much as *one* "expreſſion dropt from him, which *fa-*"*voured* in the leaſt of *fierceneſs* and *in-*"*humanity?* Did he diſcover the leaſt "*tincture* of an *implacable* and *unforgiv-*"*ing* Spirit?" His friends will not blaſpheme his character ſo much, as to caſt ſuch a diſhonourable imputation upon him; and, in this particular, his very *enemies* muſt be *aſhamed* to defame him. For his *paſſions* were entirely calm, his *commiſeration* was ſtrong and lively, and his

his *generoſity* unconquerable throughout the whole courſe of his Sufferings. He reſented, with a lively feeling of humanity, every thing that had the appearance of *cruelty*, even againſt thoſe that ſought his life; and therefore miraculouſly healed *the High-Prieſts ſervant*, ſent to *apprehend* him, whom one of his Diſciples had wounded: And he *died* glorioufly, *praying* for his *perſecutors*; "and as a "proof of the *nobleſt* benevolence, and "a perfectly *ſerene* and *undiſturbed* mind, "urging the *only* circumſtance, that could "be thought of, in *extenuation* of their "guilt." This remarkable prayer is recorded by St. *Luke*, in theſe Words, (which will doubtleſs be remembered to the *everlaſting honour* of our Saviour's Example) *Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.* Luke xxiii. 34.

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We read indeed, ſometimes, of his giving *ſevere* and *reproachful* names to perſons eminent, and diſtinguiſhed by their *wickedneſs*: But this is conſiſtent with the utmoſt meekneſs and compoſure of Spirit, whenever it is neceſſary, as it *then* was, to expoſe *popular* vices; hypocriſy and

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and malice under the *maſque* of *devotion*; and craft, rapaciouſneſs, and oppreſſion, *ſkreened* and *recommended* by their appearing in *high* characters. Our Lord's cenſures were only juſt *reproofs*, ſeaſonable *proteſts* againſt flagrant immoralities; and from which (as he appeared in the ſublime character of the *Meſſenger* and *Prophet* of God) "no conſiderations of *pru-* "*dence*, *complaiſance*, or *decency* could "be ſufficient, in *reaſon*, to reſtrain him." For his office was to rebuke ſin *impartially*; and the extraordinary *credentials*, which he brought Heaven, would ſupport and juſtify him in *detecting* and *ſhaming* vice *wherever* he found it, even in the moſt *ſacred* and *exalted* ſtations. "The *weight* and *authority* of his own "miſſion, and the *rectitude* and *happi-* "*neſs* of the World, both demanded "it."

AND when, in ſome paſſages of the New Teſtament, *anger* is aſcribed to Chriſt; it never denotes "that *wild* and "*extravagant* paſſion, thoſe *tranſports* "of rage, that *confuſion* and *perturbation* "of thought, that thirſt after *revenge*

"and

" and *blood*, which are too uſual marks SERM.
" and diſcoveries of anger in *precipitate* VIII.
" and *ungoverned* tempers, and drive *hu-*
" *manity* and *mercy* from the heart of
" man,"— but a *generous indignation* a-
gainſt *ſin*. His reſentment was not level-
led at the *perſon* of the offender; but at
his diſſimulation, perfidiouſneſs, cruelty,
and other crimes, which are juſtly and
highly *offenſive* to the *wiſe* and *virtuous*.
We are therefore expreſſly told, that
while he *looked round about* on the *Pha-* Mark iii.
riſees with *anger*, he was GRIEVED *for* 5.
the hardneſs of their hearts: His Soul
was at the ſame time open to *kind* impreſ-
ſions, and he generouſly *pitied* their un-
happy depravity. " So that our bleſſed
" Saviour's *benevolence* was as incapable
" of being obſcured by *violent* and *diſor-*
" *dered paſſions*; as it was of being leſ-
" ſened by *injuries*, or diſcouraged by the
" *fear* of *death*."

AND as this excellent virtue was in the
illuſtrious character of Chriſt *calm*, *mild*,
and *forgiving*; it was alſo *humble* and
and *condeſcending*. Though he was *the*
beginning *of the* Creation *of God*, and be- Rev. iii.
fore 5.

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fore his incarnation poſſeſſed of inconceiveable glory and dignity, yet he freely conſented to that moſt *ſtupendous abaſement* of aſſuming the human Nature, to lead a life of *poverty*, *affliction*, and *diſgrace*; and cloſed the ſcene of his *humiliation* by a *violent* and *ignominious* death. The *everlaſting good* of mankind was the ultimate end he had in view: "And this "he thought an end ſo truly grand and "noble, as that it was becoming him, "though ſuperior in *ſtate* and *honour* to "all the *angelical* powers, to be *himſelf* a "*man*, and *converſe familiarly* with *men*, "in order to promote it." — This indeed is an inſtance of *condeſcenſion*, that admits of no *parallel* amongſt all the creatures of God. Before it, the moſt *heroic* acts of *human* generoſity are in a manner loſt, and ſtripped of all their luſtre. It is juſtly deſcribed, in the New Teſtament, as *aſtoniſhing* even to *ſuperior* Spirits; the ſubject of their humble *contemplation*, and joyful *praiſes*. And to Chriſtians of every *degree* and *character*, it ſpeaks this language. *Look not every one on your own things, but every man alſo*

Phil. ii. 4, 5.

alſo on the things of others; let this mind SERM.
be in you, which was alſo in Chriſt Jeſus. VIII.
Let the example of his divine condeſcenſion (if you have merely a regard to *decency* of character) *ſhame* you out of your pride and haughtineſs; and teach you to know your *nature*, and your *duty*, better, than to think it any diſparagement to your brighteſt accompliſhments, or the higheſt worldly honours, to practiſe the neceſſary *humilities* of true goodneſs; to conſult and labour, and ſacrifice *popularity*, *grandeur*, nay *life* itſelf, for the proſperity and welfare of your fellow-creatures. For the *inflexible* temper of pride, and a *diſdainful* treatment of your inferior brethren, are not more unſuitable to human nature, and the reaſon of things, than they are a direct contradiction to the ſpirit of chriſtianity, and to the conduct of its Author; who himſelf ſays, *Take my* Matt. xi.
yoke upon you, and learn of me: For I 27.
am meek and lowly in heart.

DURING the whole time of his public miniſtry, he was peculiarly remarkable, for a frank and obliging *humanity* of behaviour, to all who had the honour

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to converſe with him. He lived both with his friends, and carried himſelf towards ſtrangers, with an open generous *familiarity*; was eaſy of *acceſs*; and ready to communicate inſtruction and relief to every *fit* and *worthy* object. He was of a *modeſt unaſpiring* temper, and induſtriouſly ſhunned *grandeur* and *oſtentation*; avoiding company, and chuſing ſolitude, when the people, infatuated by their carnal notions of the temporal reign of the Meſſiah, would have taken him by force to make him *a king*. And from this humble diſpoſition, ſprang that *contentment* and entire *tranquillity* of mind, which he always expreſſed in low and deſpiſed circumſtances: As his being placed in ſuch circumſtances ſuggeſts another very important *reaſon* (beſides the force of his *example*) for the practice of theſe virtues, by giving us an undeniable demonſtration, that contempt and poverty are no marks of the *anger* and *diſpleaſure* of heaven, ſince they were the lot of him who was perfectly innocent, and the beloved Son of God.

To

To all theſe excellent and uſeful virtues was added, in the life and example of Chriſt, an unſtained and inviolable *integrity*; not *raſh*, and *incautious*, and courting dangers unneceſſarily; but guided by *a juſt diſcretion*, and yet ſteady and inflexible. In his doctrine, he *ſo far* conſulted the *prejudices* of his hearers, as to open and enlarge their minds by *degrees*. He avoided the perſecutions of his enemies, and the effects of their implacable malice, when he could do it with *honour* and *a good conſcience*. But he never uſed any *arts* to deceive them into *wrong meanings*; never, by *ſtudied ambiguities* of ſpeech, flattered and confirmed them in their *errors*. He oppoſed *corruption* and *vice*, however univerſal and faſhionable, however diſtinguiſhed and dignified; and at laſt bravely died in maintenance of his own integrity, and for the cauſe of truth and virtue, which are the cauſe of God and Man. SERM. VIII.

I HAVE attempted nothing more than ſome of the *great lines*, but intended not, in all particulars, a *compleat* illuſtration of the *ſhining* excellencies, of our Saviour's

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example; becauſe the nature of ſuch compoſitions as theſe would not, without being thought *tedious*, admit of ſuch prolix diſcourſe. — I ſhall, therefore, only add, that our profeſſion and character, as *Chriſtians*, oblige us to make this example as far as it has now been exhibited (and in all the other branches of it, in which it is capable of being imitated) the model of our own lives: Or, in the language of St. *John*, that every one *that abideth in Chriſt*, whether more or leſs enlightened, *ought himſelf alſo ſo to walk, even as* HE *walked*.

1 John ii. 6.

SERMON IX.

Of INCREDULITY, and the MORALITY of FAITH.

JOHN xx. 29.

Bleſſed are they, that have not ſeen, and yet have believed.

OBSERVATIONS of this kind, are liable to be groſſly abuſed by two ſorts of perſons; by the *enemies* of the Chriſtian revelation, and by its *weak* and *injudicious* friends. The deſign of the former is to ſubvert its authority, and expoſe it to reproach, as an abſurd and irra-

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tional inſtitution. The latter, tho' they *mean well*, and think of it with no other ſentiments, but thoſe of *reſpect* and *honour*, help to *undermine* it by their unjuſt repreſentations of its peculiar doctrines; and give its adverſaries frequent advantages and occaſions for triumph, which they are always ready to improve. So that tho' the *end*, which they have in view, be different, their *work* is in a great meaſure the ſame; and the *unſkilful* defender hurts the cauſe of Chriſtianity very little leſs, then the ſubtile and determined oppoſer of its truth and excellence. And it generally happens, that the *abuſe*, committed by theſe contrary parties, is of the ſame preciſe nature too; the *miſtakes* and *perverſions* of Scripture are the ſame; the doctrines, which are allowed by the one, as *naturally deduced* from particular paſſages, are acknowledged, likewiſe, to be *fair inferences* by the other: But the friend receives them with *veneration*, the enemy rejects them with *ſcorn*. We need not go far to find inſtances of this, nor indeed to enquire for any other, than what the unnatural and overſtrained interpretations, which

which have been put upon the Text itſelf, plainly afford. For the *unbeliever* ſuppoſes, that our bleſſed Saviour meant to encourage ſuch a *blind* and *raſh credulity*, ſuch *confidence* and *ſtrength* of *perſuaſion*, without light or evidence, as he directly *terms* enthuſiaſm, and wiſely explodes under that character. So that *he* only errs, tho' from great inattention and prejudice, with reſpect to the *true ſenſe* of the paſſage; but if it be granted, that he has explained it *right*, his objections are pertinent and unanſwerable. The *Chriſtian*, on the other hand, imagines the ſame *thing* to be intended; only he gives it a more ſpecious and reputable *name*; ſtiling that, which, in reality, is *enthuſiaſm*, divine illumination, and the humble ſubjection of reaſon to faith. He therefore is erroneous, both as to the *true meaning* of the Text itſelf, and the *judgment*, which he paſſes upon what he *apprehends* to be the meaning of it. And one of my principal views in chooſing it, for the ſubject of this diſcourſe, is to vindicate the great Author of our religion, from every imputation of this kind; by which

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his wiſdom and divine authority are blemiſhed and reduced.

LET it only be premiſed, before I enter directly upon what I propoſe, that the reaſons, why *general maxims* and *obſervations* are ſo often *miſinterpreted*, are theſe—The not conſidering, that in ſuch obſervations there is ſome *one point* principally intended, and that they have almoſt always a particular reference to *certain caſes*, which the Author had in his view.—The not conſidering, that they can frequently be ſtiled *general* obſervations only *thus far*, as they extend to *every inſtance* of *the caſe*, to which they more immediately relate, and to *all others*, that are exactly *parallel*.—And, of conſequence, that to apply them, by ſtraining every expreſſion to its utmoſt latitude, either to caſes, that are quite *contrary*, or intirely *different*, or which differ in any *material* circumſtance, is very injurious to the writer, and ridiculous in itſelf. — Let us then, to avoid this confuſion, briefly ſtate that part of the evangelical hiſtory, with which the Text ſtands connected.

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AFTER our Lord's reſurrection, he ſhewed himſelf to be alive, by infallible proofs, to many of his diſciples. Beſides his appearance to *Mary Magdalen* (of which St. *John* gives an account in this chapter) he was, according to St. *Paul*, ſeen of *Cephas*, or *Peter*; then of the twelve, who converſed with him, ſeveral times, during the ſpace of forty days. He was likewiſe *ſeen of above five hundred brethren at once*; that a *ſufficient number* of Witneſſes might not be wanting to atteſt this great and marvellous event, upon which the truth of Chriſtianity depends: Who merely on account of their *number*, joined with the *frequency* of his appearance, cannot be charged, but by a ſuſpicion, that will ſtick at nothing, with being impoſed upon by *fancy* or *melancholy*. — On account of the *little expectation* they had of his reſurrection, they cannot be fairly accuſed of being miſguided by their *preſumptions*. — And becauſe they *all* undauntedly ſuffered *death*, againſt every dictate of *reaſon*, if their teſtimony was falſe, and againſt the *ſtrongeſt paſſions* of human nature, and all hope of

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intereſt preſent or future; they can, with as little colour of probability, be ſuſpected of wilful *fraud*. But this being only an *incidental*, tho' otherwiſe a very important reflection, I return to the hiſtory. — When our Lord had diſcovered himſelf to his diſciples, who were aſſembled together on the day of his reſurrection, to perform, as is moſt likely, their religious exerciſes, and, to remove all their *doubts*, had *talked* with them, and ſhewed them his *hands* and his *feet*; St. *John* informs us, that they related this wonderful ſcene to *Thomas*, one of the twelve, who was not with them, at *that* time, when *Jeſus* came. Upon which this Apoſtle, without weighing the matter deliberately, made a *raſh* reſolution, that except he ſhould *ſee the print of the nails*, and *put his finger into the print of the nails*, and thruſt *his hand into* his maſter's *ſide*, (where he had been wounded with a ſpear) he would *not believe*. And, at our Saviour's next appearance (when *he* was preſent) this favour was allowed him; but with this rebuke to him for his *obſtinacy* in inſiſting on having his *curioſity* gratified, and determining

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ing not to be *convinced* but in his own way, *Be not faithleſs, but believing.* He was not here cenſured for *requiring evidence*; but for being ſwayed by *humour*, and an *unyielding ſtubborn* temper: Which is altogether as criminal, and hurtful in its conſequences, as an *over-haſty* and *implicite* faith. However, tho' he had a diſpoſition too *ſtiff* and *incredulous*, he was ſtill ſo *honeſt*, as to ſubmit to the conviction, which he had now received, and expreſſed it, as we are told it in the 28th verſe, with a becoming mixture of ſurprize and reverence. And this naturally drew that anſwer from Chriſt, of which the Text is a part: *Thomas, becauſe thou haſt ſeen me, thou haſt believed: Bleſſed are they, that have not ſeen, and yet have believed.* The method, that I think moſt proper to explain this ſubject fully, is this. SERM. IX.

FIRST, To make ſome brief remarks on the particular *caſe*, which was the *ground* of this aſſertion of our bleſſed Saviour. And then to ſhew,

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SECONDLY, what *inferences* may be fairly deduced from it.

I begin, as the natural train and order of our reflections, and the courſe of the whole argument, require, with making ſome brief remarks on the particular *caſe*, which was the ground of our Saviour's obſervation in the text.

AND, FIRST, tho' the conduct of *Thomas* plainly exempts him from the charge of an *eager* and *precipitate credulity*, with reſpect to the *fact* of our Lord's reſurrection; nay, tho' it may ſeem to argue a wiſe *caution* not to be impoſed upon in points of high importance; and would, perhaps, have been *applauded*, and *cited* as an *example*, by men of a *ſceptical* turn in all ages (if he had not afterwards deſtroyed all his *merit* by *believing*) yet it might, in reality, proceed from nothing elſe, but the ſtrength of his *prejudice*. Had he only ſaid to the other diſciples, who related that, of which they themſelves were *eye-witneſſes*, that tho', as he had long known their *character*, and

and believed them to be perſons void of *art* and *criminal purpoſe*, he was ready to pay all *due regard* to their teſtimony, yet as their information related to an *extraordinary* and *ſupernatural* event, he was inclined not to be *haſty* in determining, but ſhould be glad of *ſtronger* and more *convincing* proofs; this would have had the appearance of *calmneſs* and *moderation*, as well as of *ingenuity* and true *diſcretion*. But the declaration, which he made, that he would *not believe*, unleſs he was favoured with *a particular kind* of conviction, that mere *caprice*, and not *reaſon*, led him to deſire; this was evidently the language of paſſion, which *prejudice* always inſpires. *Reaſon* could never dictate ſuch a reſolution as his was; which amounted, in effect, to this (if it was founded on any principle at all) that he would *believe nothing*, for which he had not the evidence of *ſenſe*; and the evidence of ſenſe, in *that way too*, which ſuited his *fancy* beſt. To what then can it be aſcribed? To nothing, moſt certainly, but to ſome *bad* cauſe or other, that ought not to have had ſuch a prevailing influence; and nothing SERM. IX.

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thing is ſo likely to have been that bad cauſe as *prejudice*. By this ſuppoſition it will be intirely accounted for; and there are ſeveral things, related in the goſpel hiſtory, that direct and lead us to it, and to nothing elſe ſo clearly. For that the *Jews* univerſally, and the apoſtles equally with the reſt of their country-men, were prepoſſeſſed with the notion of a *temporal glorious* reign of the *Meſſiah*; that they were extremely *fond* of it; nay, that they were quite *infatuated* and *inſlaved* by it; is undeniable. Let us then only imagine, that *Thomas* ſtill retained a conſiderable ſhare of this old *national* tincture; and it will ſufficiently account for his *unguarded* reſolution; which can, by no means, be reconciled with *ſobriety* of thought and *cool* reflection. And if it really ſprung from *prejudice*, as ſeems moſt probable, the words of the text, accommodated to the caſe of *Thomas* conſidered in *this* light, muſt be underſtood thus: "*Bleſſed*, i. e. "*more* bleſſed (for the expreſſion, in the "deſign of it, is manifeſtly *comparative*) "*more bleſſed* are they, they are of a *better* "diſpoſition, more *praiſe-worthy* and "emi-

" eminently *rewardable*, whom, becauſe they are of *fair* and *honeſt* minds, and free from *conceit* and *obſtinacy*, *proper evidence* will always perſwade; than thoſe, who, merely on account of their *prejudices*, are not convinced by arguments of *weight*, which are, in themſelves, *fitted* to work conviction, but want the teſtimony and demonſtration of *ſenſe* to conquer their prepoſſeſſions, and in a manner *conſtrain* their aſſent." SERM. IX.

Theſe laſt, it muſt be allowed, are in ſome degree *happy*, if they are brought, at laſt, to acknowledge principles, which are of great moment and uſe, upon their own terms; but ſtill, upon a compariſon, there is ſomething, in what is aſſerted in the text, indiſputable and obvious to the reaſon of every man, *viz.* that they are happy in a *peculiar*, and much *higher*, ſenſe, " who are more *ingenuous* and " *tractable*; or, in other words, *who have* " *not ſeen, and yet have believed.*"

AGAIN, it may be farther obſerved, upon the particular caſe of *Thomas*, to which the text refers, that his prejudice, and raſhneſs, and the extravagance of the reſolution

SERM. IX. reſolution, which he formed, appear undeniably from hence — That he might have had *ſufficient* proofs of the truth of our Saviour's reſurrection, in ſeveral other ways beſides that he fixed upon, and was determined to adhere to, as the *only means* capable of yielding him ſatisfaction. Of this no Chriſtian can poſſibly doubt; all of us, in theſe latter times, being in the number of thoſe, *who have not ſeen, and yet have believed.* And we, ſurely, think, that we have *ſolid grounds* and *reaſons* for our belief, tho' we want the evidence of *ſenſe.* But beſides this general reflection, let us imagine the caſe of the Apoſtle, of whom we are now ſpeaking, to have been *different*, in moſt material circumſtances, from what it actually was: let us ſuppoſe, that he had never been favoured with the *ſight* of our Lord, after his riſing from the dead: Yet if he had received repeated *atteſtations* of it from the mouth of *eye-witneſſes*, and, withal, had been *commiſſioned*, as indeed he was, to preach to the *Gentiles, Jeſus and the reſurrection*; and *enabled* to confirm this important doctrine by numerous and inconteſtable *miracles*; could

could he have wanted any *neceſſary means* of conviction? If theſe were ſufficient to *convert* the *Heathen* world to a belief of it, were they not alſo ſufficient to eſtabliſh *his own faith?* Or, to put the matter in another light, let us imagine, that he had been permitted to *ſee* and *converſe* with Chriſt, but not indulged in what he laid ſuch a particular *ſtreſs* upon, *viz. putting his fingers into the print of the nails, and thruſting his hand into his ſide:* Could the want of this alone have *juſtified*, or even *excuſed*, his being an infidel? It is impoſſible, and abſurd to common ſenſe; becauſe if the ſenſes were not to be *truſted* in one caſe, they muſt be equally *fallacious* in another. As therefore, without this, *Thomas* might have had *clear* and *full* evidence of the great truth, about which he heſitated; evidence, upon which he might have aſſented to it without *raſhneſs* or *enthuſiaſm*; nay evidence, upon which he *ought* to have aſſented to it; he acted like a man, who wanted more to have his *humour* gratified than his *reaſon* convinced. And ſhould every one inſiſt upon demonſtrations of *ſenſe*, either from

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SECOND place, to ſhew what inferences may be fairly drawn from this propoſition, as it has been before explained.—*Bleſſed are they, that have not ſeen, and yet have believed.*

AND the FIRST thing we learn from it, is, that *faith*, as well as what are diſtinguiſhed by the name of works of righteouſneſs, may be *virtuous* and *rewardable*. For when our Saviour ſays, *Bleſſed are they, that have not ſeen, and yet have believed*, he plainly declares, that there is ſomething *peculiarly* worthy and excellent in ſuch a character; that demands eminent *praiſe* from men, and intitles it to a ſignal *reward* from God. And it muſt be mere trifling to attempt to prove, that that, which is capable of *degrees* of goodneſs, may be, in itſelf, *good*; and that whatever can recommend to a *greater* reward,

muſt be, in itſelf, *rewardable.* This therefore is a neceſſary concluſion from the text, and, of conſequence, a part of the Chriſtian doctine. SERM. IX.

BUT what if *reaſon* ſhould oppoſe it? I anſwer, that this is impoſſible, as the Chriſtian revelation is really divine. For truth, whether diſcoverable by the light of nature, or made known in a more *extraordinary* way, muſt always be *conſiſtent.* Still it will be ſaid, that this is only arguing with *Chriſtians* upon their own principles; but can have no *weight*, where theſe principles are not received and acknowledged. I allow it, and am therefore willing to examine the *infidel*'s plea. And what is the *ſubſtance* of it? —Why, that faith has no virtue or true *merit* in it, becauſe we cannot *avoid* aſſenting to particular truths, when the *proofs* are clearly diſcerned, and appear to be ſtrong and convincing; and muſt, in all caſes, *believe*, or *diſbelieve*, juſt as the evidence *appears* to our underſtandings.—But this, in my opinion, is talking very looſely and ſuperficially. For if it depends, in a great meaſure, upon *ourſelves*, that things ap-

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pear to our underſtandings in *juſt* or in *falſe* lights; if this be owing (as it is almoſt univerſally) on the one hand, to *diligence* and *mature reflection*, and, on the other, to *intire negligence*, or *partial inquiry*, to *criminal prejudice*, or the ſtrength of *corrupt paſſions*; it follows of courſe, that in all ſuch caſes, where our right belief ſprings from *integrity* and the *due* exerciſe and improvement of our rational powers, and our infidelity from a *vicious indolence* and *depravity* of temper, the one may fitly be *rewarded*, and the other righteouſly *puniſhed*; as fitly, indeed, as any inſtance of *moral rectitude*, or of *corruption* and *iniquity*, that can be mentioned.—A man might aſſert with equal propriety, that *murder itſelf* is not criminal, when it is committed in a mad fit of drunkenneſs and tranſporting paſſion, as that *infidelity* is not, when it proceeds from the bad cauſes, which have been ſpecified, or from any others of a like nature; becauſe things may *appear* to the mind of the murderer, when he is blinded by intemperance, or diſtracted by paſſion; things, I ſay, may *appear*, to the mind of the murderer, as ſtrangly *perverted*

verted and *altered* from their true nature, while he is in this condition, as they *can ever do* to the underſtanding of the infidel, when he is perſuaded to reject the moſt important and uſeful truths.—And the one can no more help being *guided* and *determined* by *appearances* than the other. SERM. IX.

SECONDLY, by what has been ſaid, we are naturally led to adore the wiſdom of Providence, in ordering and diſpoſing things, in ſuch a manner, in this *probationary* ſtate, that the evidences of religion ſhould not be *overpowering* and *conſtraining*, ſo as to render the conviction *neceſſary*, but only adapted to *perſwade*. For, by this means, *faith* may be an *exerciſe*, and *improvement*, and a *clear proof* of our integrity, as well as what are called moral diſpoſitions, and the practice of moral duties.

In the THIRD place, it is a plain and natural inference from the text, that a faith built on ſuch evidence *only*, as is ſtrong enough, where there is *attention* and *honeſty* to *convince* the judgment, but does not *force* an aſſent, has more *excellence* and *worthineſs* in it, and juſtly in-

SERM. IX. titles to a *higher* reward, than a perſwaſion, that could not be *avoided*, becauſe the evidence was *irreſiſtible*. I have called this an inference, as it is not *in terms* aſſerted, but it is, to ſpeak more properly, the direct *intent* of our Saviour's words; *bleſſed are they, that have not ſeen, and yet have believed.* And the reaſons, which ſupport the truth of this obſervation, are theſe, which follow.—That ſuch a faith, as is built only on proper and ſufficient evidence, muſt require a greater ſhare of *reflection* and *deliberate inquiry*, than where the proofs are ſuch, as render conviction and belief neceſſary: That it argues greater *ingenuity* and *probity* of mind: That it has more *difficulties* to ſurmount, and ſtronger *prejudices* to conquer: That it is in a great meaſure *voluntary*, and depends upon our own *care* and *application*: All which circumſtances contribute conſiderably to render any action *morally* good; and the want of them proportionably diminiſhes, or quite deſtroys, the *virtue* of it. *Faith*, in this notion of it, is conſidered as a *moral virtue*, and eſtimated as *all other* moral virtues are: So that the principle,

which I am now illuſtrating, is not an *arbitrary* conſtitution and rule ſettled by *Chriſtianity*; but an *eternal* dictate and law of *reaſon*. SERM. IX.

THE general uſe to be made of this diſcourſe is, to learn from thence, how to preſerve the due *medium* between the two extremes of *credulity* and *ſcepticiſm*; of *preſumption* and *obſtinacy* of *believing*, where there are no *ſolid grounds* of faith, and *doubting*, where there are no *reaſons* for doubt. And the only way to avoid theſe errors, of which it is hard to decide, which is the moſt dangerous, is *not to believe at any time* without *ſufficient evidence*; but *always* to acquieſce in *that*, of whatſoever *kind* it be, without inſiſting on any particular *ſort* of proof, which is not neceſſary, but which may prove a dangerous ſnare to us, by ingaging us to defend a headleſs forward reſolution, at the expence of truth and honeſty.—And let all, who now think it their privilege, and their honour, that they *believe*, and have liberty to *profeſs* the Chriſtian religion, be incouraged to perſevere in this excellent faith, which has ſuch ſtrong reaſons to

SERM. IX. ſupport it, by this conſideration; that tho' they have not the evidence of *ſenſe*, for the *extraordinary facts* recorded in the goſpel, they have ſomething of no ſmall moment to *compenſate* for the *want* of this ſuperior evidence. Becauſe, ***Bleſſed are they, that have not ſeen, and yet have believed.***

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SERMON X.

The Nature of HEAVENLY CONVERSATION explained.

PHILIPP. iii. 20.

For our converſation is in heaven.—

THE Apoſtle *Paul*, who was one of the greateſt and moſt excellent characters in all antiquity, propoſed to the *Philippians*, in the 17*th* verſe, his own example for their imitation. *Brethren*, ſays he, *be followers together of me, and mark them, who walk ſo, as ye have us for an enſample.* In the two

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following verſes he laments, in a moſt *benevolent* and *pathetic* ſtrain, the too common degeneracy of Chriſtians, who led a diſſolute and ſenſual life; and thereby brought ſhame and miſery upon themſelves, as well as a reproach and ſcandal on Chriſtianity: *Many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping*, that they are *the enemies of the croſs of* Chriſt; *whoſe end* is *deſtruction*, *whoſe God* is their *belly*, and whoſe *glory* is *in their ſhame*, *who mind earthly things*. Then in the Text, (which muſt be connected with the 17*th* verſe, and what comes between be conſidered as a parentheſis) he gives the *reaſon*, why he recommended his own life, as a *fit* pattern for Chriſtians to copy after — *For our converſation is in heaven*. As the general ſenſe of this paſſage is very obvious to every reader, I ſhall not ſpend any of your time in amuſing criticiſms upon words, but proceed directly to conſider the thing itſelf, which will afford both more *ſolid* and *uſeful* reflections. And all that is neceſſary for the clearing this ſubject, and

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ſetting it in a true light, will fall in naturally under theſe heads. SERM. X.

FIRST, The *nature* of a heavenly converſation. And,

SECONDLY, The great *advantages* and abſolute *neceſſity* of it; and the *particular obligations*, that Chriſtians are under, to have their *converſation in heaven*.

In the FIRST place, I am to explain the *nature* of a heavenly converſation. And there are certain general rules neceſſary to be obſerved, to prevent obſcurity and confuſion in our reaſonings about it; which I ſhall therefore premiſe, before I come directly to the point itſelf.

And, FIRST, to avoid the imputation of *enthuſiaſm*, with which the enemies of religion are too apt to load *all* the branches of it; to avoid, I ſay, the imputation of *enthuſiaſm*, and make it a *rational* and *practicable* ſcheme, we muſt take care to form ſuch an idea of an heavenly converſation, as is conſiſtent with the *frame* of our nature, with the *neceſſary concerns* of human

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human life, and the *duties* and *offices* of the particular characters and relations in it. " The infinite wiſdom of God can " never place his creatures in any *poſt*, " that does not deſerve their *attention* :" —and therefore to be ever thinking of *heaven*, and neglect *this world* altogether, muſt be very unſuitable to the deſign of providence in the preſent conſtitution of things. For tho' heaven be our ultimate happineſs, and deſerves our higheſt and ſtrongeſt affections; yet *this earth*, as long as we continue on it, is the proper *ſphere* of our activity, the *ſcene* of our duty and ſervice. There are many things in it, that are neceſſary to be *obſerved* and *purſued* by us, to ſecure our own happineſs, and promote the good of our fellow-creatures; and other things, a regard to which muſt be the *juſteſt application* of our rational faculties, as they tend to give us a more diſtinct and enlarged ſenſe of the abſolute perfection of the univerſal creator. Beſides, while we are compounded of body and ſpirit, to endeavour to be quite diſengaged from *ſenſible* objects, and conſtantly employed in *refined*

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and *ſpiritual* exerciſes, is not only aiming at ſomething *above* our *character*, nay, at a thing *impoſſible*; but ſuppoſes, moreover, that "*one part* of our nature, e- "qually the *workmanſhip* of an all-wiſe "Being with the more ſublime and noble "part, is entirely *uſeleſs*." To which I may add, that a heavenly converſation muſt, in the nature of the thing, imply in it, that we employ much of our thoughts and care about the *way*, that leads to heaven. — Now this way lies through the *preſent world*. — And therefore if we are *unconcerned* and *indifferent* about the ſtate and conduct of affairs in *this* life, we can never, according to the intention of God's providence, prepare for the *future*.

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I WOULD obſerve further, that the great God, even in this lower conſtitution and ſcene of things, however *imperfect*, deſigned to give us moſt engaging marks of his wiſdom and goodneſs; and therefore hath provided for us many delightful *accommodations*, and *innocent pleaſures* of various kinds, particularly ſuited to our frame, as beings indued with *animal* paſſions. "So that if we

"*deſpiſe*

SERM. X. "*deſpiſe* theſe things, and *devote* ourſelves *entirely* to contemplation and retirement, we not only injure ourſelves, "by making this world a more *diſagreeable ſituation*, than the Author of all "Good intended it ſhould be; but, in "effect, affront his *munificence* and *liberality*." And, conſequently, we cannot ſuppoſe, without making Chriſtianity, and the diſpenſations of God's providence, *claſh* and *interfere* with each other, nor, indeed, without *reproaching* our Saviour's own conduct, that ſuch *unnatural* ſeverity and contempt of the world is any part of that heavenly converſation, which the Text recommends.

MUCH leſs can it imply in it ſuch eager and impatient deſires of the heavenly happineſs, as make us in *ill humour* under our preſent circumſtances, and *careleſs* of life. For this is inconſiſtent with that calm and thorough ſubmiſſion to providence, which, for moſt valuable purpoſes, has fixed us for a while in this probationary ſcene, which the *imperfection* of our *knowledge*, and the *dependent ſtate* of our *nature*, neceſſarily oblige us to. Nor can it, on any

any principles of reaſon, be imagined, that our gracious Creator has made it our *duty*, to paſs our time here below in fretfulneſs and diſcontent. The contrary is moſt evident, from that ſtrong principle of *ſelf-preſervation*, which is planted in *all* mankind. And that it is our duty to *cultivate* this principle, and, conſequently, to render life as *agreeable* as we can, within the bounds of *decency* and *innocence*, appears undeniable from this ſingle conſideration; that, otherwiſe, not having a ſufficient *motive* to it, "but rather "ſtrong *inclinations* to the contrary, "we ſhall not take that due care to "*maintain* and *ſupport* life, as the "*improvement* of our own minds, the "*particular caſes* of thoſe, who may de"pend upon us, and the *general intereſts* "of ſociety, require."

FINALLY, the great *uſe* of a heavenly converſation muſt be this, to *quicken* us to a faithful and diligent diſcharge of the duties, which we are *now* called to perform. — If therefore we *neglect* any important branch of *ſocial* virtue; if we affect the *recluſe*, when we are called forth to *active* ſervice, and

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SERM. X. ſpend that time in ſecret meditations, and fervent aſpirings after *heaven*, which ought to be devoted to the *public* good; we are ſo far from diſcharging, aright, the *duty*, which St. *Paul* exhorts to, or imitating his example, that our conduct is repugnant to *reaſon*, diſhonourable to *Chriſtianity*, and fruſtrates the great end of our *preſent being*. Thus much for the *firſt* rule, *viz.* That to form a *juſt idea* of a heavenly converſation, we muſt make it conſiſtent with the *preſent frame* of our nature, and the *neceſſary concerns* and *duties* of human life.

SECONDLY, As the duty recommended in the Text is of *univerſal* obligation, it ought to be explained *ſo*, as will ſuit the *condition* of *all* Chriſtians, their *various* capacities, and circumſtances in the world; and nothing ſhould be taken into the *general idea*, or *deſcription*, of it, that depends on a *peculiar* conſtitution, *warmth* of paſſions, *ſtrength* of underſtanding, or *ſpecial* opportunities and advantages for improvement. For inſtance, it muſt not be made *neceſſary*, to a man's having

having *his converſation in heaven*, " that his meditations about heaven be to ſuch " a degree of *intenſeneſs*, or attended with " *rapture* and *tranſport*; that *preciſely* " ſo much *time* be ſpent in thoughts " and reflections of this kind; or that *a* " *particular high degree* of knowledge, " and of abſtractedneſs from the world, " be acquired." Thoſe, who have capacity, and opportunity, for thus *enlarging* and *exalting* their conceptions, enjoy a peculiar and moſt *deſireable* privilege. But to inſiſt on this, as abſolutely *eſſential* to a heavenly converſation, with reſpect *to all* Chriſtians, is making *no allowance* for their *different* characters, and circumſtances in life: It is deſcribing that as an *univerſal* duty, which can be expected only from a *few*; and the performance of which depends upon *accidents*, that are quite out of *our power*.

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LET me add, in the THIRD place, that it will be particularly uſeful to us, in underſtanding the true nature of *a heavenly converſation*, to endeavour to frame a juſt general idea of *the heavenly happineſs*. Falſe notions of it will naturally

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lead us into *enthuſiaſm*: but if, by proper care and application, our judgment be rightly informed in this grand and fundamental point, it will ſo conduct and aſſiſt our reaſonings, that we ſhall be ſecured from groſs and dangerous errors. For if we conceive of the future happineſs, as *intellectual* and *moral*, conſiſting in the *rectitude* of our rational powers, and an exact *conformity* to the *moral excellencies* of the Supreme Being; as a ſtate of refined *knowledge*, and exalted *virtue*; this will *convince* us, that none can be *truely* ſaid to have their *converſation in heaven*, but thoſe, who reſemble God in *purity*, *righteouſneſs*, and *beneficence*. In like manner, if we conſider it under the notion of *a reward*, beſtowed by the great Governor of mankind, not *arbitrarily*, but for the ſupport and encouragement of true piety, integrity, and goodneſs; we can never *imagine*, that a contempt of *preſent* pleaſures, and thinking of the bleſſedneſs of the future world (though with the moſt *ardent longings*, and an extraordinary *livelineſs* and *vigour* of *affection*) will be of *any avail*, as long as we are *careleſs* about

about governing our *paſſions*, or live in the *omiſſion* of *relative* and *ſocial* duties. SERM. X.

THESE general rules being premiſed, I now proceed to conſider, more directly, what is *implyed* in having our *converſation in heaven*. And the whole will be comprehended under theſe three heads: FIRST, *Frequent meditation* on the heavenly happineſs, and, in conſequence thereof, an *habitual conviction* of its *ſupreme* worth and excellence. SECONDLY, That having made the attainment of it our *ultimate* end, we keep up a *ſteady* regard to this end, in the whole of our conduct, and purſue every thing elſe in *ſubordination* to it. And, THIRDLY, cultivate that *temper* of mind, and conſtantly maintain that *courſe* of life, which are particularly *adapted* to the heavenly ſtate.

IN the FIRST place, the having our *converſation in heaven* implies, in it, *frequent meditation* on the heavenly happineſs, and, in conſequence of that, an *habitual conviction* of its ſupreme worth and excellence. It is evident, at firſt ſight, that the *character*, which St. *Paul* has

SERM. X. given of himſelf in the Text, can no way *belong* to thoſe, who *never think* of heaven, or employ their thoughts but *very ſeldom*, about the joys and glories of the bleſſed world above. Such perſons, inſtead of expecting their higheſt happineſs there, and making it the ultimate ſcope of their wiſhes, can only be ſaid to take, *now* and *then*, an *occaſional* and *tranſient* view of it, as of a country, in which they imagine they have but little *concern*. Nor are ſuch *ſlight* reflections likely to have any conſiderable influence. For it is not the *importance* of the thing in itſelf, it is not the *exceeding greatneſs* of the future reward (though far tranſcending all our *ideas*, and the utmoſt ſtretch of our *imaginations*) that will affect our hearts and influence our practice, if it be not perceived in a *clear* and *ſtrong* light; which can *only* be the *effect* of frequent and ſerious meditation. And this is the more neceſſary, becauſe the joys of heaven are future and inviſible; upon which account they have generally the *leſs* weight, and make a *feebler* impreſſion upon the mind.

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I AM obliged, therefore, to engage SERM. *often* in ſuch reflections as theſe: —" That X. " *I am a ſtranger*, and *a ſojourner* here " *upon earth*, *as* all *my fathers were*: " that the preſent ſcene is *preparatory* to " an *immortal* exiſtence, in which *alone* " I can hope for *perfect* felicity, worthy " the *nobleſt faculties* of my nature, and " adapted to its *largeſt deſires*: that, in " this future ſtate, my underſtanding " will be *enlarged*, my affections *regu-* " *lated*, my mind *refined* and *purified*: " that its joys are *unmixed*, without the " leaſt *alloy* of vice or miſery; *ſolid* and " *everlaſting*, and, in ſhort, of ſuch an " exalted kind, that, in compariſon of " them, the moſt *ſplendid* and *magnifi-* " *cent* images of worldly happineſs are " *low* and *deſpicable*. Thus, remem- " bring, that I have here *no abiding place*, " am I to *look for a city*, *which hath foun-* " *dations*; *whoſe builder and maker is* " *God*." And a frequent contemplation of the heavenly glory will open ſo *bright*, ſo *delightful* a ſcene, will ſo *warm* and *captivate* the mind, that it will, of courſe, look down with *indifference* on the trifl-

SERM. X. ing advantages and pleaſures of this life. But then theſe impreſſions muſt be ſo ſtrong, and deeply *fixed*, as to be an *habitual* and *governing* principle; otherwiſe, their effects can neither be *certain*, nor *laſting*. They may be the foundation of *ſhort-lived* reſolutions, and *occaſional* acts of goodneſs; they may *check*, in *ſome* degree, the forwardneſs and heat of licentious paſſions; but are not likely to produce a *thorough* reformation, nor a *uniform* and *ſteady* courſe of virtue. This is the FIRST branch of a heavenly converſation, and the *baſis* of all the reſt, that we *frequently meditate* on the happineſs of the heavenly ſtate, and get an *habitual perſuaſion* of its infinite importance and value. And, as a neceſſary conſequence of this,

SECONDLY, We ſhould make the attainment of it our *ultimate* end; keep up a *conſtant* regard to this end, in the whole of our conduct; and purſue every thing elſe in *ſubordination* to it — Cultivating our *rational* faculties; neglecting *no duty*, that our circumſtances and character, in the

the world, require from us; loſing *no opportunity* of doing good; acting, in *all* caſes, with a *ſtrict* regard to the divine authority, and an *inflexible* integrity: and, if we are, at any time, tempted by worldly *honours*, and the bewitching allurements of irregular *pleaſure*, controuling *ſenſual appetite*; giving up the moſt *flattering proſpects*; and ſubmitting to the *greateſt difficulties—for the joy, that is ſet before* us. Being *intent* on obtaining the heavenly felicity, we ſhould do nothing, that may *damp* our hopes, or render our title to it *perplexed* and *dubious*; but be *circumſpect* in our behaviour, *diligent* in all the offices of life, which we are called to perform, *ſtrict* in ſelf-government, and *uſing this world* with moderation, and ſo as not to *abuſe* it to intemperance and exceſs, becauſe *the faſhion* of it *paſſeth away*.

WE are not indeed obliged, as was hinted before, to *converſe* ſo much with *heaven*, as to deny ourſelves the *innocent* gratifications, which *this world* affords. But, ſurely, if we have ever meditated on

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the conſummate, moſt glorious, and everlaſting happineſs of the future ſtate, with becoming attention and ſerioufneſs, we cannot but have a ſtrong conviction, and a lively affecting ſenſe, of the *comparitive vanity* of all inferior enjoyments. The glittering pomp of human greatneſs will not *dazzle* our underſtandings; nor the pleaſures of ſenſe *enſlave* us. We ſhall willingly exchange the *tinſel* of worldly glory, for the *ſubſtantial honour*, that reſults from God's approbation, and from being owned and regarded as his favourites; and give up *brutal* indulgencies, for the joys of *Angels*, of exalted *knowledge*, ſublime *purity*, and *love*, and the *influences* of *his* goodneſs, who is the only fountain of bleſſedneſs. And nothing can be a more melancholy inſtance of the moſt extreme corruption and depravation of *reaſonable* beings, than to be ſo *over fond* of a ſtate, in which the pleaſures are *few* in number, *mean* in their qualities, *uncertain* with reſpect to their duration, and the vexations and inquietudes *many* and *great*, as, for the

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ſake of it, to forfeit a claim to an *eternal* exiſtence, in the higheſt *honour* and *perfection*, that human nature is capable of. There is an irreſiſtible force, that muſt immediately ſtrike the mind with a ſtrong ſenſe of the amazing extravagance of ſuch a conduct, in theſe queſtions of our Bleſſed Saviour. —— *What is a man profited, if he ſhall gain the whole world, and loſe his own ſoul? or, what ſhall a man give in exchange for his ſoul?* But the chief and moſt eſſential part of a heavenly converſation is, SERM. X. Matt. xvi. 26.

IN the THIRD place, cultivating that *temper* of mind, and conſtantly maintaining that *courſe* of life, which are particularly *adapted* to the heavenly ſtate. Is it then *an inheritance undefiled*, that admits of nothing ſinful or impure? The natural reflection, which this ſuggeſts, is, that we muſt *ſubdue* all corrupt appetites, *rectify* all evil diſpoſitions, and habits, and *perfect holineſs in the fear of God*, if ever we expect to be partakers of this *inheritance of the ſaints in light*. Is it a ſtate, where *charity never faileth*, of moſt *lively*, *generous*,

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and *Godlike* benevolence? —As a neceſſary qualification for it, we muſt mortify *pride*, and raſh *anger*, *malice* and *revenge*, and all ſuch like *turbulent* and *injurious* principles; and train our ſelves up to the *habitual* exerciſe of *charity*, and *mercy*, to a *delight* in doing good. Is it a ſtate, wherein we ſhall be made *like unto the Angels of God, who do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word?* — Let it be our care to cultivate always, in our minds, a ſupreme *reverence* and *love* of the Deity, and by a frequent, devout, contemplation of his excellencies, and other acts of piety, maintain ſuch a ſerious regard to his authority, and firm belief of the wiſdom, equity, and goodneſs of his providence, as will excite us to yeild an *univerſal* and *chearful* obedience to his commands. And, finally, is it a ſtate, wherein thou wilt be *diveſted* of the *animal* nature, and of all *ſenſitive* affections and appetites, and where thy pleaſures will be *intellectual* and *divine?* — *Enure* thy ſelf then to exerciſes of *reaſon* and *virtue*; *refine* thy views; *raiſe* thy notions of happineſs; and *reſtrain* carnal deſires;

deſires; that thou mayeſt gain an *admit-* SERM.
tance into that ſuperior world, into which X.
fleſh and blood cannot enter, and be able to *reliſh* its ſublime imployments and delights.—" This is the only *infalible* mark " of a heavenly converſation, when it " brings us to a *ſimilitude* of diſpoſitions " and manners, with thoſe, the bleſſed " inhabitants above." Where this is wanting, *all other* marks are precarious and deceitful. " Our *meditations* on heaven " are like a man's amuſing himſelf with " with the thoughts of *a beautiful country*, " at *a vaſt diſtance* from him; its *fruit-* " *ful* ſoil, the *healthy* temperature of its " and climate, the *clemency* and *good* " *order* of its government, the *wiſdom* " and *wholſomeneſs* of its laws; and other " *advantages*, which he is *never* likely to " enjoy." Nay, we may wiſh, with *Balaam*, to *die the death*, and enjoy the the future reward of *the righteous*, and receive not the *leaſt* advantage by it: For this ſingular privilege is not to be obtained by indulging to *pleaſing dreams* of happineſs, or by *lazy*, *inactive* wiſhes; but only by improving in *habits* of piety and goodneſs,

SERM. X. goodneſs, and leading a *virtuous*, and a *uſeful* life. And now, having largely explained the *nature* of a heavenly converſation, I proceed,

SECONDLY, to ſhew the great *advantages*, and abſolute *neceſſity*, of it; and the *particular obligations*, that Chriſtians are under, to have their *converſation in heaven*. The advantages of it are various, as well as eminent.—It will *prevent* our giving way to thoſe *ſenſual exceſſes*, that debaſe our nature, extinguiſh the light of reaſon, and are the ſource of confuſion and miſery: For we ſhall have but a mean opinion of ſuch *ſuperficial*, *groveling*, *ſhort-lived* pleaſures, in compariſon of the *glorious bleſſings*, which we hope hereafter to enjoy, in the everlaſting kingdom of God.—Again, a heavenly converſation will *refine* our temper, and give a noble *ſublimity* of thought, above all low and baſe purſuits; and a *firmneſs* and *conſtancy*, that will be proof againſt the ſtrongeſt temptations.—The *proſpect* of it fills the good man with the moſt exalted delight; it compoſes the mind; calms every uneaſy and boiſterous paſſion; heightens the

the true enjoyments of life, and alleviates the evils of it. For what can be a more effectual ſupport to the mind under affliction, than the firm belief, and joyful expectation, of an eternity of perfect happineſs, when the troubles and miſeries of this life are at an end? Were it not for this *future* bleſſed ſtate, human life, in its preſent *weak* and *diſordered* condition, would, in many inſtances, be ſcarce *tolerable*; *the ſpirit of a man* would *ſink* under *its infirmities*, had he no proſpect of any *brighter* ſcene to counterbalance his miſeries. But it reconciles to *all* events, and naturally inſpires *reſolution* and *fortitude*, when we look forward to that deſirable world, where *there ſhall be no more ſorrow, nor pain, nor death; but God ſhall wipe away all tears from our eyes.* Theſe are ſome of the advantages of a heavenly converſation in this life. SERM. X.

BUT we are to conſider farther, that it is not only *uſeful*, but *neceſſary*. — It is abſolutely neceſſary, in the nature of the thing itſelf, in order to our *reliſhing* the heavenly felicity. For, without a *virtuous* diſpoſition and turn of mind, there

SERM. X. there can no more be *a taſte* of *divine* and *moral* pleaſures, than there can be of *animal* gratifications without the *ſenſes*. —It is *neceſſary*, likewiſe, from the wiſdom and juſtice of God, as the governor of rational and moral agents: For, to beſtow this tranſcendent happineſs on impenitent ſinners, who have deſpiſed his *authority*, and trampled upon the *law* of their nature, would be the ready way to bring the eternal rules of righteouſneſs and virtue into *contempt*; it would be giving a *licence* to vice, and allowing *full ſcope* to corrupt inclinations. Which neither the abſolute perfection of the Deity, nor his concern for the rectitude and happineſs of the intelligent creation, can poſſibly *admit* of.—Finally, a life *ſuited* to the heavenly ſtate is expreſſly declared, in the new teſtament, to be indiſpenſably neceſſary to our enjoying the rewards of it; and this, we have already ſeen, is not a capricious and arbitrary conſtitution, but founded on eternal principles of *wiſdom* and *equity*. *He* alone, ſays our bleſſed Saviour, *ſhall enter into the kingdom of heaven, who doth the will of my father, who*

Matt. vii. 27.

who is in heaven. The author of the epiſtle to the *Hebrews* informs us, that, *without holineſs, no man ſhall ſee the Lord.* And, not to multiply paſſages in ſo plain a caſe: *Know ye not, that the unrighteous ſhall not inherit the kingdom of God?* Be not deceived; *neither fornicators, nor adulterers, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor effeminate, nor drunkards,* nor extortioners, (nor any other *notorious* and *habitual* offenders againſt the laws of reaſon and Chriſtianity) ſhall *inherit the kingdom of God.*

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Hebr. xii. 14.

1 Cor. vi. 9. 10.

If, therefore, it be the wiſdom and intereſt of all, who believe a future reward for virtue, to be diligent and conſtant in the univerſal practice of it; what a *peculiar* obligation are Chriſtians under, to whom the heavenly bleſſedneſs is ſo *fully* revealed, and with ſuch a variety of *affecting* circumſtances! Beſides the *clear diſcovery* of a future reward in general, about which *philoſophy* was uncertain and dubious; we are *aſſured* of the reſurrection of the body, an active, vigorous, incorruptible principle, ſuited to the inlarged faculties of the perfect ſpirit, (that the whole

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whole human nature may appear in compleat dignity) and of an *immortality* of bleſſedneſs, in the preſence and enjoyment of *God:* Concerning both which great points the deciſions of reaſon were *dark* and *confuſed.*

SEEING then, we *look for theſe things*, theſe great things, *which eye hath not ſeen, neither* can *it enter into the heart of man* fully *to conceive —what manner of perſons ought we to be, in all holy converſation and godlineſs! Patterns* of integrity, peace, and love, of contentment, and reſignation to Providence, and of a bright and exalted piety. Thus, by acting *conſiſtently* with our character, and high expectations, ſhall we *adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour.* And then, to uſe the words of St. *Paul*, immediately following the text, we may, with a ſerene and joyful confidence, look for the Saviour, *the Lord Jeſus Chriſt; who ſhall change our vile body, that it may be faſhioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working, whereby he is able even to ſubdue all things unto himſelf.*

SERMON XI.

The different CHARACTERS of TRUE RELIGION, and ENTHUSIASM.

JOHN iii. 8.

The wind bloweth where it liſteth, and thou heareſt the ſound thereof, but canſt not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: So is every one, that is born of the Spirit.

THESE words are part of a diſcourſe, which our bleſſed Saviour had with *Nicodemus*, a man of diſtinguiſhed rank and figure among the *Jews*. This perſon was

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was *convinced* by the miracles, which *Jeſus* wrought at *Jeruſalem*, that he was really a divine prophet; and, therefore, tho' he was reſtrained, by the known bigotry and malice of his countrymen, from *publiſhing* the high opinion he had entertained of this ſacred inſtructor, he went privately to him *by night*, to confer with him, upon ſubjects of *religion*. And he began with this *judicious* and *argumentative* introduction, *Rabbi, we know, that thou art a teacher come from God: For no man can do theſe miracles, which thou doeſt, except God be with him.* In anſwer to which, our Lord, that he might not imagine, that a mere *belief*, and *acknowledgement* of the truth, was *ſufficient*, to intitle him to the privileges and rewards of Chriſtianity, fairly repreſented to him the *one neceſſary* and *indiſpenſible* qualification for obtaining the favour of God, and eternal life, in the third verſe of this chapter: *Except a man be born again, he cannot ſee the kingdom of God.* This was ſtrange doctrine, and appeared, indeed, *extravagant* to *Nicodemus*; who, by an unaccountable miſtake, overlooked

the *figure*, and underſtood the words of *natural* birth. And upon this foot, it was reaſonable for him, and highly pertinent, to urge the *incredibility* of the thing, in it ſelf, and deſire a more *explicit* and *diſtinct* account of this *wonderful* doctrine. He therefore put this queſtion, *How can a man be born, when he is old? Can he enter the ſecond time into his mother's womb, and be born?* To this our Saviour replied, that the thing would not appear to be altogether ſo *myſterious*, when *rightly* apprehended, as his *prejudices* induced him to think it was; but might, as to the *poſſibility* of it, be illuſtrated by a *well-known*, and very *familiar* inſtance. *Marvel not*, ſays he, *that I ſaid unto thee, ye muſt be born again. The wind bloweth where it liſteth, and thou heareſt the ſound thereof, but canſt not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: So is every one, that is born of the Spirit.*—Which words, have been thus, very judiciouſly *paraphraſed*. —"That, even in the natural world, "there are many things, in themſelves, "ſo ſubtle, that we cannot at all diſcern "them with our eyes, which yet are

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SERM. XI. " very manifeſt, and very great in their " effects. The *wind* is a thing altoge- " ther inviſible, and no man can behold " its motion, even when it bloweth with " the greateſt violence; yet, that there " *is ſuch a thing*, is evident enough, " and the *effects* of it are ſufficiently " known. Thus, therefore, that *re-* " *generation*, or renovation of the heart, " and manners, which is worked in a " man, by the efficacy of true religion, " and the operation of the Spirit of God, " tho', in itſelf, it be inviſible, and not " at all diſcernable by *ſenſe*, yet, in its " *effects*, it is a very great and plain thing; " and, really, as manifeſt and conſider- " able a change, to all the purpoſes of " *eternal* life, and happineſs, as the *birth* " of man is, in reſpect of this *mortal* " life." I ſhall only add, that as Chriſt rather directed us to judge of our divine and ſpiritual *regeneration*, by the *effects*; if this be a *right* rule of judgment, the effects intended muſt be of ſuch *a kind*, as will probably, at leaſt, indicate their *cauſe*. And what can theſe *poſſibly* be, but the exerciſe of all *religious* and *moral* virtues

virtues; or what St. *Paul* directly ſtiles the *fruit of the Spirit*; viz. *goodneſs*, *righteouſneſs*, and *truth?* From theſe words, I ſhall take occaſion, SERM. XI.

In the FIRST place, to explain the *nature* of regeneration, or the new birth, and endeavour to rectify ſome great *errors*, that this *figurative* way of ſpeaking has introduced. And,

SECONDLY, as what ariſes naturally from the ſubject, I ſhall point out ſome of the moſt material *differences* between *true religion* and *enthuſiaſm*.

I am, FIRST, according to the method propoſed, to explain the *nature* of regeneration, and endeavour to rectify ſome great *miſtakes*, that this *figurative* way of ſpeaking has introduced. And, in general, it muſt be evident to the firſt apprehenſions of all mankind, that the phraſe can, here, be uſed only in a *moral* ſenſe. *Nicodemus*'s interpretation of it, as denoting a freſh communication of *animal* life, argued, as to this ſingle point, at leaſt, a very *confuſed* and *contracted* underſtanding. For, what had that to do with *religion*,

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ligion, or with the *dignity* and *purity* of a doctrine, brought by a *teacher* ſent *from God?* But, beſides that the reaſon of the thing ſtrongly remonſtrates againſt all ſuch *groſs* meanings as theſe; we are directly informed from the mouth of Chriſt himſelf, that his expreſſions were *metaphorical:* If, ſays he to his diſciples, *I have told you earthly things* (things illuſtrated by *compariſons*, drawn from *ſenſible* objects) *and ye believe not; how ſhall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?*

And what now is the *moral* ſignification of being *born again*; what elſe *can* it be but this; "That a man has ſincerely and intirely renounced all the *corrupt ſentiments* he had before maintained, the *irregular paſſions* he had indulged, and the *wicked practices* he had been guilty of, and was entered upon *a quite different* kind of *life*; ſo that the *conſtitution* of the *mind*, which is the ſpring and ſource of all external actions, was in a manner *created* and *formed anew?*" In this view, it is an *apt*, *eaſy*, and *elegant* figure, and conveys a moſt important and uſeful meaning; and

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if rooted and warm prepoſitions, in favour of *ſcholaſtic* ſchemes of divinity, had not embaraſſed and depreſſed our *natural* judgment of things, I make no doubt, but it would have been univerſally allowed to be the *only rational* meaning, that the expreſſion is fairly capable of. SERM. XI.

WE may, indeed, *ſtretch* a *metaphor* to the *utter confuſion* of all reaſon and morality, and till we are loſt in a *labyrinth* of our own contriving. And this has been, too frequently, the unhappy fate of *ſcripture-metaphors*; which, inſtead of *deriving* light from thoſe plain paſſages, that were intended to be the *ſtandard*, has *obſcured* all their light, and the moſt *certain maxims* of natural religion likewiſe. For who, almoſt, could have thought, that becauſe *renovation* of heart and life is compared to *a new birth*, it ſhould from thence be concluded, " that " mankind are purely *paſſive* in their *re-* " *formation* from vice to virtue; that it " is in the *ſpiritual* birth, as in the *na-* " *tural*; that the *converſion* of ſinners is " wholly owing to a *ſuperior* and *irre-* " *ſiſtible* agency; and that we have *no*

SERM. XI. "*power at all* to do *any thing* in it of "our ſelves; or with a divine *incitation* "and *impulſe*—that men, upon the *ſingle* "authority of a *metaphor*, ſhould be thus "reduced to *mere machines*, void of *in-* "*telligence* and *free volition* within them- "ſelves, and *wholly directed* by the un- "derſtanding and will of another,"—in oppoſition to *univerſal* experience, which loudly teſtifies, that they are *able* to *diſtinguiſh* the difference of good and evil, and are *proper* ſubjects of *moral* government.

AND, the holy ſcriptures plainly acknowledge this, not only to have been the *original frame*, but to be the *actual condition* of human nature; ſince they abound with *commands* and *exhortations*, directed to men in their *own perſons*, to *waſh and make themſelves clean*; to *ceaſe to do evil, and learn to do well*; to *circumciſe their hearts, and be no more ſtiff-necked*; to *put off the old man*, and *be renewed in the ſpirit of their minds:* All which exhortations, if they have any *energy*, any *propriety* or *ſenſe*, at all, in them, muſt imply *thus much*; that we are capable of

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conſidering ſeriouſly the nature and conſequences of our actions, and of *determining* our own behaviour; and that we have *a power conſtantly reſiding in ourſelves*, and under our *own command*, as long as we retain the *due uſe* of reaſon; that we have, I ſay, *a power*, the exerciſe of which does not depend on *arbitrary* and *precarious impulſes* from other beings, to *renounce* all paſt miſcarriages, and *turn our feet to* the divine *teſtimonies*.—For was there ever a wiſe and righteous lawgiver, who *enjoined impoſſibilities?* Is not an *exhortation* to things *known* to be *beyond* our *ſtrength*, ludicrous and trifling? Is it not *upbraiding* us, in a moſt ungenerous and cruel way, with the *impotence* of our nature? And can it, notwithſtanding, be the conduct of the God of *truth*, of immutable *juſtice* and *mercy*, to his frail and miſerable creatures; who muſt, upon this ſcheme, deſerve to be *pitied* and not *inſulted?*

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AND, as the *commands* and *exhortations* of the Goſpel, urging to repentance and amendment of life, neceſſarily ſuppoſe, that there is in mankind *a power* to rectify the

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AGAIN, if men were intirely *paſſive* in the affair of *regeneration*, if they were able *to do nothing*, themſelves, towards producing this great effect, but *all* muſt be expected from the *influence* and *energy* of God; it would then be *impoſſible*, that any man ſhould be *regenerated ſooner* than

than he is; and, conſequently, all his *former* deviations, from the rule of right, would be *unavoidable* and *innocent*. — And, yet, how often is God, in the holy ſcriptures, repreſented as expoſtulating with ſinners, upon their *obſtinate continuance* in immoral courſes, and *deferring* their repentance: — How long *will ye refuſe to keep my commandments?* How long *will this people provoke me?* How long, *ye ſimple ones, will ye love ſimplicity, and the ſcorners delight in their ſcorning, and fools hate knowledge?* O Jeruſalem, *waſh thyſelf from wickedneſs*, that thou mayeſt be clean; how long *ſhall vain thoughts lodge within thee?* And, again, O Jeruſalem, *wilt thou not be made clean*; when *ſhall it once be?*

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THERE are various other conſiderations, which tend to confirm this truth; but I ſhall, at preſent, content myſelf with adding, that the ſcriptures of truth, ſtrictly correſponding both with reaſon and experience, never attribute vice and impiety to *an incapacity*, in the human nature, to reform itſelf; but always to *free* choice and *wilful* determination.

Thus

SERM. XI. Thus our Saviour ſpeaks concerning the incorrigible *Jews* in his time, that they would not *come to him, that they might have life*; that *they were of their father the devil, and* would *do his works*; and, of Jeruſalem, *how often would I have gathered thee, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye* would not. And the ſame divine Author of our religion declares, in more *general* terms, that *this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men* love *darkneſs rather than light, becauſe their deeds are* evil.

To theſe arguments, drawn from ſcripture, let me add a brief *deduction*, of the ſame general truth, from the certain *nature* of things; and examine, how the caſe ſtands on *rational principles*, abſtract from all ſchemes and prepoſſeſſions, with reſpect both to the *moral ſtrength*, and *weakneſs*, of human nature.

IN the FIRST place, then, I think it can with no plauſibility, or colour of reaſon, be denied, that mankind, however depraved and diſabled by the fall, are *capable* of *diſcerning* what their *duty* is, and wherein

wherein their *true happineſs* conſiſts. They extend their enquiries very *far* into *other* concerns; they ſearch *deep* into the receſſes of nature, by ſtudy and careful enquiry, joined with experience; they are able to *explain* many *abſtruſe* parts of the ſyſtem of the univerſe, and to *illuſtrate* the wiſe laws and wonderful diſpoſitions of providence — And can it be imagined, that their own *proper duty, as men,* is beyond the *reach* and *comprehenſion* of their underſtandings? Can it be conceived, that their *own happineſs* is ſo *perplexed* and *inſcrutable* a ſubject, that they can form no clear and ſettled *judgment* concerning it? "*Deplorable* and *horrid,* then, is the *de-*"*ſtiny* of men; and very *ungracious,* "ſeems to be, the *care* and *providence* of "their Creator."

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AND as to the doctrines and duties of *revelation,* they muſt be *capable* of arriving at the *true ſenſe* of theſe too, unleſs it be a revelation *unrevealed.* For to ſuppoſe, that a *farther* ſupernatural and inward *illumination* is neceſſary to give a right and juſt idea of *ſcripture* doctrines, is, in effect, to aſſert, that the ſcriptures

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are of *no uſe* at all; and that "the *in-*
"*ternal teaching* is the *only* revelation
"of the mind of God to mankind." But here again a conſiderable difficulty occurs; and that is, how we can *poſſibly* know, that this inward teaching is really *divine*, but from its *correſpondence* with the *external revelation*, and with the light and dictates of *reaſon*; and, conſequently, without admitting, "that the external "revelation may be *underſtood* without "it, and that reaſon is the eternal *ſtan-*"*dard* of truth."

SECONDLY, As it is unqueſtionably confirmed, that mankind, in the *preſent* ſtate of their faculties, however impaired and diſordered, are *qualified* for underſtanding what their *duty* is, and by what methods to purſue their *chief happineſs*; ſo it can, with as little reaſon, be diſputed, that they are *capable* of *acquiring*, a deep and lively *impreſſion* of religious and moral truths: For this intirely depends on their being *repreſented* to the mind with proper *force*, and frequently *inculcated* by

unprejudiced and ſerious *conſideration.* — And is it abſolutely out of *the power* of man, to *conſider ſeriouſly?* Is it beyond his *natural abilities* to *reflect*, *often*, on affairs of the utmoſt conſequence? *Can* he have a juſt *theory* of the Chriſtian Religion; and is it, at the ſame time, *impoſſible* for him to be *convinced* of its *intrinſic excellence*, and *infinite importance* to his preſent peace and everlaſting felicity? Such an inſinuation as this muſt, I apprehend, redound as little to the credit of *Chriſtianity*, as to the honour of *human nature.* SERM. XI.

SHOULD it be ſaid, that by the *original biaſs* of his nature to *evil*, and its *averſion* to what is *good*, man is neceſſarily *diſinclined* to, and *indiſpoſed* for, reflecting on ſuch ſubjects as theſe; I anſwer, FIRST, that "the *ſtrongeſt diſinclination* does, by no means, infer an *utter* "*impoſſibility.*" Nay, the contrary is moſt evident: For let the indiſpoſition be *equal* to what is ſuggeſted in this objection, man muſt *ſtill* be a *free agent*, and have it in *his power*, to be either virtuous, or vicious; or elſe he is abſolutely *incapable* both of *religion*, and *moral government.*

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ment. — And, *Secondly*, we find by experience, that " there are *no other* aver-
" ſions, *no other* difficulties, *no other*
" confirmed and moſt inveterate habits,
" but what may be *altered*, *corrected*,
" and *ſubdued* by the ardour and ſpirit of
" *human reſolution*. And can we think,
" that our nature is ſo *odd*, and ſo *defec-*
" *tive*, a compoſition, that it can conquer
" *every diſinclination*, ſurmount *every dif-*
" *ficulty*, and reform *every wrong habit*,
" but what is of a *religious* nature?" It is an *incredible* ſuppoſition, and moſt injurious to the wiſdom and goodneſs of the Deity. So that it appears, upon the whole, that mankind are, in their *preſent* circumſtances, capable of *religion* and a life of *moral rectitude*; becauſe they can *underſtand* their duty, and *impreſs*, upon their conſciences, a ſtrong *ſenſe* and *conviction* of its fitneſs, and infinite importance, by cloſe and frequent meditation; and there is *no cauſe* in *nature*, that can *neceſſarily prevent their acting*, according to their inward *judgment* of things; " and
" becauſe the *ſame reſolution*, with which,
" we ſee, that they often break through
" other

" other *ſtubborn* habits, and ſuſtain *ſur-* SERM.
" *priſing*, and almoſt *incredible*, con- XI.
" flicts, muſt, according to the *courſe* of
" nature, gain them the *victory* over *any*
" habits whatſoever, and raiſe them to a
" pitch of *illuſtrious* and *exalted* good-
" neſs."— Thus much for the *power* of human nature, and to advance the *glory* of the almighty and gracious Author of it.

THE *true* argument with reſpect to its *weakneſs* (neither aggravated by a ſpirit of pride and ſelf-ſufficiency, nor diminiſhed by ſpleen and prejudice) will be comprehended in the following particulars. — That its *animal paſſions* are *ſtrong* and *turbulent*, and apt to *oppoſe*, and, upon a little indulgence, to *controul* and *overrule*, the dictates of *reaſon* — that an *unhappy conſtitution* of *body*, and the various *diſorders*, to which it is ſubject, are a heavy clog upon the *mind*, and cloud and interrupt the *freedom* and *livelineſs* of its operations — that *objects* of *ſenſe* make *powerful* impreſſions on human nature, and it is, every where, ſurrounded with with numberleſs *temptations* to vice and irre-

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irregularity—that *evil examples* often times corrupt it *early*, *indolence* enervates it faculties, *partial views* of things betray it into dangerous errors, and the *avocations* and *cares* of civil life, and commerce, have too direct a tendency to divert its attention from the *ultimate concern* of its being, and the momentous intereſts of an *eternal futurity*; and, finally, that *popularity* is apt to enſlave it, *corrupt cuſtoms* to entice it to *a habit* of *vanity*, and *licentious company* to inſtil into it degenerate principles, and baniſh the *remorſe*, which it would otherwiſe feel, upon the commiſſion of evil actions.—We may, therefore, from the whole, infer, that tho' human nature *is not*, with reſpect to the practice of piety and virtue, in a ſtate of *utter impotence*; nay, tho' it be poſſeſſed of very *conſiderable abilities*, to diſcharge the duty indiſpenſibly incumbent on it, and calm and regulate tumultuous paſſion; yet there is a ſufficient *foundation*, in reaſon, to admit the doctrine of *divine aſſiſtances*, eſpecially in the caſe of *evil habits* long contracted, and deeply rooted in the mind, or in *ſpecial ſeaſons* of danger and diſtreſs.

diſtreſs. And, viewing it in this light, the doctrine of the *New Teſtament* will appear moſt admirably to harmonize with *nature*, when, as was obſerved before, it ſtrenuouſly urges it as the ſinner's *duty* to *repent* and *amend* his manners, and, in the *ſtrongeſt phraſes* ever made uſe of with relation to this ſubject, to *create* in himſelf *a new heart*, and to *awake* and *riſe from the dead*, that *Chriſt* may *give* him *light*; and, at the ſame time, to encourage him to exert himſelf with the greater zeal and activity, directs him to implore the *help* of *God*, who will *give his holy ſpirit to them that aſk him.* SERM. XI. Eph. v. 14.

THERE has been another inference, *extorted* from the *metaphor* made uſe of in the text, which I think it proper briefly to animadvert upon, *viz.* that the *new-birth* is not *gradual*, but *inſtantaneous* like the *natural*.—I would in candour ſuppoſe that the meaning here is, that the *firſt principle* of ſpiritual life is communicated *all at once:* Otherwiſe, the *metaphor itſelf* fails, and, of conſequence, all the *deductions* made from it muſt be en-

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tirely impertinent and inconcluſive. Taking this, therefore, to be the thing really intended, the doctrine grounded upon it is, that the converſion of ſinners is not effected by *degrees*; but reducible to ſome determinate *point* of time, and wrought altogether by the efficacious and irreſiſtible energy of the ſpirit of God.

THIS, perhaps, might not be of importance enough to deſerve our notice, were it not that, in conjunction with ſome *other* principles, it has a very malignant and fatal tendency. — For let a man, a notorious ſinner (as he will *unavoidably* if he adheres to this ſcheme) fix on that as the *preciſe time* of his converſion, when he is moſt ſtrongly *convicted* of his guilt and miſery, with convulſions of *terror*, and agonies of *deſpair*, and let him alſo believe, that the *once* regenerate is of the *election* of grace, by the *unfruſtrable* decree of the Almighty, and can never *finally periſh*, however his regeneration may be *diſhonoured* and *obſcured*, and all the *marks* of it ſuppreſſed, by enormous and capital vices; that he may not-

notwithſtanding, with St. *Paul* (whom he ſuppoſes to repreſent *his own* real character) be *carnal and ſold under ſin, and brought into* CAPTIVITY *to the law of ſin, which is in his members:* Let him, I ſay, confound and jumble all theſe errors together in a kind of *connection* of religious principles — and *converſion* may be without *purity*, *religion* without *godlineſs*, *chriſtianity* without *virtue*. Neither the thunder of the law, nor the grace of the goſpel, may be capable of making any *effectual* impreſſion upon his mind; but he may be ruined for ever, *confidently* aſſured of his own ſalvation.

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I CHOOSE not to inſiſt on this topic, that the ſubduing evil habits, and the acquiring and fixing contrary diſpoſitions (which are of the *eſſence* of true converſion) muſt, in the neceſſary nature of things, be both a work of *time*, and of *gradual*, *conſtant*, *ſolicitous* effort; becauſe this is an experienced and ſelf-evident truth. It is ſufficient for me to have ſhewn, that the before-mentioned notion of regeneration, built on *figures* of ſpeech,

SERM. XI. in contempt of plain and univerſal *reaſon*, opens a door for all manner of *preſumptuous* and *unbridled* immorality.

AND now from the premiſes laid down, and the train of reaſoning purſued, in the preceding part of this diſcourſe, I am naturally led to conſider, SECONDLY, the *difference* that there is between *true religion* and *enthuſiaſm*; which is a *ſmooth* and *ſpecious* error, and very apt to *inſinuate* itſelf, where there is a low underſtanding, a heated fancy, or ſtrong paſſions. — "*Enthuſiaſm*, generally, prevails as the "*counterfeit* of true religion, and by affecting to raiſe it to an *unuſual* pitch of "ardour and elevation. And the *proper* "*ſeaſon* to introduce it is, when the *rational offices* of *piety* are *neglected* or "treated with *irreverence*; and, in conſequence of this, *violations* are, likewiſe, made on *other* indiſpenſable "branches of *moral duty*." No wonder then, if ſome *appearances* of it ſhould be found among *ourſelves*, when *vanity* and *ſoft effeminate entertainments* engroſs ſo much of our time, as to leave ſcarce any

room for *ſerious reflections*; and the man of *pretended* elegance has neither inclination, nor leiſure from his more *important* affairs of *indolence* and *gaiety*, to *think of* the God of his life, the Author of that reaſon which he *debaſes*, and of thoſe paſſions which he ſo unnaturally *perverts*; nor, even from a regard to *decency* (which one would imagine ſhould have *ſome* weight, if more worthy and ſublime motives had loſt *all* their influence) to join in thoſe *public honours*, which are paid to the common Parent of mankind by the conſent of the moſt *civilized* nations, as neceſſary to prevent the *inroads* of *univerſal barbariſm*, and hold together the *frame* of civil ſocieties, in *better order*, and more *firmly compacted*.

In ſuch a *rank* and *corrupt* ſoil, *enthuſiaſm* will ſpring up and flouriſh; unleſs the idea of the Deity could be totally *effaced*, which nature itſelf forbids. The *weakeſt* among the *vulgar* have diſcernment enough to ſee, that *this ſtate* of things is *very bad*, and wants to be *amended*; tho', not having maturely fixed the

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juſt meaſures of reformation, they run from the *extreme* of *licentious negligence* to *another extreme*. So that how apt ſoever the *indevout* and *free livers* of the age may be to exclaim againſt *enthuſiaſm*, "it "is a certain truth, that *irreligion* breeds "it, and nouriſhes it." And, generally ſpeaking, the *paſſive* ſubjects of it are much more *innocent* through their *ignorance*, than they who adminiſter the *occaſions* of ſuch deluſion by ſcandalous inſtances of *miſconduct*, for which there can be no colourable *excuſe*.

BUT then, on the other hand, "as "enthuſiaſm frequently takes its *riſe* from "irreligion, it ſerves alſo, in its turn, to "*propagate* irreligion." By being confounded with *true piety*, (as if the idea to both the terms were the *ſame*) piety itſelf is by many trifling pretenders to wit, and very minute reaſoners, repreſented as a thing *wild* and *deſpicable*. "A con-"cluſion more *weak*, than many degrees "even of *enthuſiaſm* are:" For it comes to this, upon the whole, that the Creator and Governor of the world, a Being

Being of all poſſible excellence and perfection, can have *no claim* to be adored and ſerved, becauſe he has been, ſometimes, *irrationally* and *abſurdly* ſerved. And at the ſame rate of inferring, if *friendſhip* has, at any time, been *improperly* expreſſed, ſuch an error muſt cancel *all ties* of friendſhip; reſpect, *unfitly* ſhown to a *parent*, muſt utterly *annul filial* duty; and whenever *injudicious* and *ill-concerted* ſchemes are propoſed and purſued for the ſervice of our country; *public ſpiritedneſs*, and *the love of our country*, muſt *inſtantly* become ridiculous. SERM. XI.

BUT tho' ſuch arguments as theſe are a reproach to common ſenſe, and juſtly expoſe *thoſe*, who make uſe of them, to all the contempt, with which they endeavour to load *religion*; yet ſtill religion *ſuffers*. *Superficial thinkers* are *actually* prejudiced, and ſet up for *libertines*; and others of the ſame *intellectual incapacity*, or *wrong biaſs* (together with the *viciouſly* diſpoſed) greedily *imbibe* the infection. And as all this *diſhonour* to the infinite Deity, to the eternal laws of reaſon, and to human na-

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ture, is occaſioned by *enthuſiaſm*; it is proper that it ſhould be briefly delineated, and its miſchievous conſequences diſtinctly deſcribed. To this, therefore, I now proceed; not intending to raiſe an odium againſt any particular *perſon*, or *ſect* (which is unbecoming the *place* in which I ſtand, and inconſiſtent with that *humanity* and *meekneſs*, which the goſpel inſpires) but ſingly the illuſtration and advancement of truth, and to prevent miſtakes, which may be attended with great miſchiefs to *ſociety*.

" *Enthuſiaſm*, in the general notion of " it, is an ungrounded and wrong pre- " tence to a *divine illumination* and *influ-* " *ence:* Which, every one muſt ſee, " may lead to *various degrees* of error, " according to the *nature*, and in pro- " portion to the *languidneſs*, or *force*, of " the inward *impreſſion* which is ſuppoſ- " ed to proceed from God." And as no man can be *certain*, when it has once *taken root*, tho' in *ſmaller* inſtances, that it will not *expand* itſelf, and riſe to the utmoſt pitch of *indiſcretion* and *irregularity*;

ty; this is another reaſon, why its diſ- SERM. criminating properties ſhould be particu- XI. larly *noted*, that we may guard againſt every thing, that has *a tendency* to introduce it.

IN the FIRST place, there is *no enthuſiaſm at all* in believing, that God, who muſt ſincerely deſire the *moral rectitude*, if he intends the *happineſs*, of his intelligent creation, there is, I ſay, *no enthuſiaſm at all* in believing, that this all-powerful, wiſe, and moſt gracious Being, maintains *a communication* with the *human mind*; and, in a way of *calm illumination*, ſuited to its original faculties, *aſſiſts* it in the reformation of evil habits, *ſupports* it under critical emergencies, and, *co-operating* with its own endeavours, *eſtabliſhes* good reſolutions, and *facilitates* its progreſs in virtue. This is not only *conſiſtent with*, but highly *probable from*, the univerſal principles of reaſon, and the moſt *worthy* and *ſublime* ideas we can form of God. And while we admit, and act under the firm perſuaſion of, this *general influence* (which the light of nature itſelf plainly

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plainly intimates) we have all the *encouragement* to diligence and activity, and to perſevere in the faithful diſcharge of our duty, that can juſtly be deſired; and are in no danger of being miſled, by heat of *fancy* and forward *preſumption*, into any dangerous errors, either in ſentiment, or practice.

" But when *particular* thoughts, im-
" pulſes, and inward impreſſions, are
" *directly* aſcribed to *a divine inſpiration*
" and *energy*, then enthuſiaſm *commences*:
" Which pretends to *trace*, minutely, the
" *operations* of God upon the *mind*; and
" to *diſtinguiſh* them not only from the
" *exertions* of its own *rational* powers,
" but from all *natural ſenſations*." Religion only teaches, that God is ready to afford us *all neceſſary* and *proper* aids, without laying down any *certain* rule, by which it can be known, *when*, in what *manner*, or in what *proportion*, theſe *aids* are vouchſafed to us. " But the *enthu-*
" *ſiaſt* is wrought up to a ſtrong imagina-
" tion, that, at certain times, he *actually*
" *feels* God within him;" and, by this

deluſion,

deluſion, he is oftentimes hurried on to very falſe and dangerous methods of conduct. Being *confident* that, at particular ſeaſons, he is under a divine influence, he has nothing more to do than to follow the *direction* of it *implicitely*; *reflection* and *cool examination* are abſolutely precluded; and being by this means rendred, for the preſent, incapable of *conviction*, he muſt, of courſe, be *irreclaimable* in his follies. SERM. XI.

AGAIN, enthuſiaſm *varies* with the conſtitution, and temper, and the ſtrength and biaſs of animal paſſions. Thus it is *ſprightly* or *auſtere*; *preſumptuous*, or *deſponding*; elevated to *fantaſtick raptures*, or diſpirited and depreſſed by *dark* and *gloomy ideas*. But rational religion inſpires, in the main, one *uniform temper*, and always dictates *the ſame invariable conduct*.

FURTHER, the enthuſiaſt acts from *ſudden* impulſes, from thoughts *unaccountably* ſuggeſted to the mind, which he conceits to be *divine infuſions*. The *ſoberly reli-*

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religious man acts *ſedately* and *cautiouſly*, and from a deliberate *judgment*. The one therefore, is liable to infinite *inequalities*, the other *ſteady* and *conſiſtent*.

OTHER *diſtinguiſhing* properties there are, which I can but ſlightly mention. — Enthuſiaſm is generally *arrogant* and *cenſorious*, confining ſuperiour knowledge, and eminence in piety, to itſelf alone; uncorrupted religion is always *modeſt* and *tractable*, *candid* and *generous*. — Enthuſiaſm can never *explain* itſelf; its *inward feelings* are, to reaſon, *incomprehenſible*; and therefore it *decries* and *vilifies* reaſon, which genuine religion *exalts* and *cheriſhes* as its *principal* and moſt *friendly* ſupport. — Enthuſiaſm can *ſubſiſt*, where *morality* is wanting; in religion, *ſtrict* and *good* morals are the moſt *eſſential* and *ſublime* part. — Finally, there is no ſetting *bounds* to enthuſiaſm, nor is it poſſible to gueſs, with any good degree of probability, what *effects* it may happen to produce; but the *effects* of true religion are *aſcertained* by *ſtated laws*, which are of eternal

eternal and immutable authority. Religion is therefore to be *depended upon*, for the regulation and exact order of human life; but enthuſiaſm can be reduced to *no ſcheme*, but, like *fancy* and *paſſion*, is wild and uncontrouled. SERM. XI.

THAT there is a great deal in religion (as it appears in the *publick profeſſion* and *practice* of mankind) which is purely *mechanical*, we may all plainly ſee. And it is the genuine character of this religion of the *body* and *animal ſpirits*, to make *ſenſible* and *warm* impreſſions, tho' they are *uncertain* and *fluctuating*. Whenever, therefore, an inward *feeling* is *fervent*, *ſudden*, *tranſporting*, it is natural to aſcribe it to an extraordinary and divine influence; natural, I mean, not in *reaſon*, but be a *ſuperſtitious* and *deluded* imagination. But that all this is, to the laſt degree, *fallacious*, appears undeniably from hence, "that we know not the "*variety*, or *force*, of *natural* impreſ-"ſions that may be excited within us, "nor underſtand the *extent* of mere *me-*

"*chanical*

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"*chanical* powers; and, therefore, "ſhould not be forward to call that *di-* "*vine*, which may be entirely *animal*." And, beſides, from hence, innumerable confuſions have actually ſprung, diſhonourable to *private characters*, injurious to *families*, and to the peace of *nations*: None of which miſchiefs would ever have been introduced, if men had judged of religion not by *ſenſe*, but from its *agreement* to the dictates of the *underſtanding*, and its *moral* effects. — Such lively and ardent ſenſations may indeed *exhilerate* the ſpirits, and ſo far they might be thought *agreeable*, and to carry a powerful *recommendation* along with them: But let it be remembred, that this will, always, be as much the caſe when *ſuperſtition*, as when *true religion*, influences. Nay, they are likely to be moſt *vehement* in the infatuations and exceſſes of ſuperſtition; becauſe *reaſon* is kept out of ſight, and there is no other principle *left* to *ſuppreſs* or *correct* ſuch diſorders. — Let us then, my brethren, be determined,

ed, upon what has been ſaid, by all *wiſe* and *calm* methods to oppoſe the *growth* of *enthuſiaſm* — And by this means we ſhall alſo, in a great meaſure, *diſarm* infidelity. SERM. XI.

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SERMON XII.

Of THEFT, FRAUD, and EXTORTION.

EXOD. XX. 15.

Thou ſhalt not Steal.

THIS command takes a much wider ſcope than is, perhaps, generally apprehended, and may be applied to a variety of caſes in the mutual *commerce* of mankind: Which either paſs by *ſofter* names, where ſome degree of *injuſtice* there is allowed to be; or are thought of too little moment, to *interrupt* the ſordid worlding in

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his eager purſuit of gain, when *cuſtom*, and the *number* of trangreſſors, ſo divides and ſpreads the diſhonour and infamy of the practice, that it does not fix itſelf on any individual, as his *peculiar* reproach. The *guilt*, indeed, of *each* particular offender is in itſelf the ſame, as if he ſtood quite ſingle, and had no aſſociates, no partners in his iniquity; and his REAL *infamy* is alſo the ſame; but he *feels* neither of theſe, if he is not marked out as a *conſpicuous* and *diſtinguiſhed* character of injuſtice: Which plainly demonſtrates how little, in all ſuch caſes, religious motives influence, how little generoſity and a ſenſe of right, and that the chief, almoſt the *ſole*, view is to popular eſtimation, and outward advantage.

How extremely *looſe* and *indigeſted* the apprehenſions (for I cannot call them *reaſonings*) of men frequently are with reſpect to ſubjects of morality, and how *haſty* and *indeliberate* their deciſions upon matters of right and wrong, their conduct in the inſtance now referr'd to, and in ſeveral others equally notorious, too fully and ſadly teſtifies. They ſeem

ſcarce

ſcarce to allow themſelves *any time at all* for reflections of this kind, tho' of the higheſt importance to reaſonable beings, in every poſſible *period* and *ſcene* of their exiſtence. They have ſeldom any *fixed*, *diſtinct*, and *uniform* ſcheme, which they hold themſelves bound to obſerve *inviolably*, in the *entire* courſe and management of their *commercial* affairs. They are contented with framing *general excuſes*, for methods of *traffick* which they cannot juſtify, inſtead of *ſettling* what is *right*, and having the honeſt reſolution of mind to *adhere* to it, that their actions may need *no excuſe:* Which ſhows but a ſcanty meaſure of *ingenuity*, of *native juſtice* and *the love of virtue*; and looks as if they made light of the *ſin*, ſo they could avoid the *remorſe*, and were not ſo much afraid of incurring *guilt*, as of the *uneaſineſs* and *ignominy* conſequent upon it. Let me add, in order to cut off effectually all ſuch lame and frivolous *pleas*, as can only ſerve to abuſe the judgment and ſtupify the conſcience of the tranſgreſſor, and prepare the way for *a train* and *progreſſion* of iniquities — " that no ſolid or

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" available excuſe can be made for any " *kind* or *degree* of injuſtice, but *abſo-* " *lute ignorance* of the crime itſelf." This, tho' it can ſeldom happen with reſpect to the general principles of right, yet may, perhaps, in ſome *minute* caſes; where there is a ſeeming *ſpeciouſneſs* and *colour* of reaſon even on the *wrong* ſide of the queſtion, or where the circumſtances are *perplexed* and *intricate*. But, even here, the *ignorance* muſt not be *affected*; it muſt not ſpring from *negligence*, *partiality*, *precipitance* of temper, or the want of that *proportion* of faithful inquiry, which is ſuited to our capacities and advantages; " it muſt not be the igno- " rance of a mind *ſunk* beneath itſelf, " *contracted* in its views and *blinded* by " covetouſneſs, and *wiſhing* to find " *gainful methods* of fraud, and injuring " his neighbour in his property, *inno-* " *cent:*" For this laſt ſort, eſpecially, argues ſuch a *mercenary* diſpoſition, ſuch a baſe *proſtitution* of all the moral powers, as ſtands fully prepared within itſelf, to ſacrifice ſocial virtue, and the unqueſtionable rights of mankind, to ſelfiſhneſs and a mean

a mean private advantage. And in all the inſtances above ſpecified, the ignorance, not proceeding from *accidental* and *involuntary* cauſes, but being merely the effect of *vice*, muſt of neceſſity be, itſelf, vicious and blame-worthy. SERM. XII.

WHAT judgment then muſt we form of thoſe, who, allowing the practice to be *unfair* and *iniquitous*, urge the force of *cuſtom*, and the *neceſſity* they are under for fear of an abridgment or diminution of their *profits*, againſt the *unalterable rules* of juſtice, and the *eternal laws* of Almighty God? Why, let us judge with truth, and with all the moderation and candour too, that are conſiſtent with truth, and we ſhall not be able to avoid coming to this, as the laſt definitive ſentence; that if they are really grave and ſerious in their plea, their way of thinking is as *abſurd*, as their way of acting is *irregular* — that they ſet up the prevalent follies and extravagancies of mankind, as the *ultimate ſtandard*, and *ſuperſede* the authority of every other law, *evacuate* the force of every other rule of action — that they urge the *increaſe* of iniquity as *a*

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reaſon for its farther increaſe — that they repreſent *juſtice* only as an *occaſional* and *mutable* tie, that muſt yield and give way to the *corruption* of the times; and lay a ſure foundation for multiplying miſchiefs and injuries *without end*. "For if *one* "degree of injuſtice may be defended, "*all others* may; ſince it is the *intrinſic* "*evil* of it, and not the *degree* of evil, "that, abſolutely conſidered, conſtitutes "the offence. And if it was in itſelf *inno-* "*cent* in *any* degree, even the very *loweſt*, "it could not *merely* as injuſtice, but on the "account of other *diſtinct* circumſtances "from whence the *whole guilt* would be "derived, be criminal, when carried to "its *utmoſt height*." And as every ſtep in this reaſoning is moſt obvious, and, in a manner ſelf-evident, thoſe who make uſe of the wretched excuſes above-mentioned, in ſupport of unrighteous depredations and incroachments upon anothers property, muſt be utterly indefenſible; as manifeſtly as their practice, built on ſuch groſs fallacies, tends to *overthrow* all moral diſtinctions, and to the *inevitable confuſion* of ſocieties.

I NOW

I NOW proceed to mention ſome of the principal heads of the crime prohibited in the text; beginning with the *groſſer* caſes, and from thence deſcending to the a diſtinct ſpecification of ſome of thoſe *leſs infamous* thefts, to which what has been already ſaid, was intended to be more particularly applied; and which can never be allowed a place in the intercourſe and buſineſs of the world, without giving up *one part* of the human ſpecies as a prey to the other, or *the whole* to prey upon itſelf. SERM. XII.

AND the FIRST thing, that will immediately offer itſelf to our thoughts, is that to which the name of *theft* is more peculiarly appropriated; whether it be *clandeſtine ſtealing*, where no alarm is given, or *robbery* committed by violence, to the terror or perſonal hurt of the party injured. Theſe miſerable offenders, while their *crimes* deſerve *deteſtation*, are *themſelves* proper objects of our *pity* and *compaſſion*. For their infelicity is oftentimes beyond expreſſion, beyond even the conception of an *honeſt* and *upright* mind; and greater than they themſelves, with

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all their *ſtupefaction* and *inſenſibility*, their audacious *defiance* of divine and human juſtice, and the help of *artificial incentives* to a reſolute and intrepid execution of their wicked and miſchievous deſigns, can, with any tolerable ſhare of quietude and compoſure, bear up under. A brief enumeration of particulars will be ſufficient to ſet their deplorable condition in a true light; to inſpire ſentiments of horror at the moſt diſtant apprehenſion, the bare poſſibility, of being ourſelves involved in the ſame labyrinth of *guilt* and *intricate diſtreſs*; and, of conſequence, a ſtrong averſion to all ſuch *beginnings* of vice, all ſuch *introductory acts* of injuſtice, as may lead in the end to ſo abandoned, ſo fatal, an extreme.

THE criminals, of whom we are now ſpeaking, have renounced their *humanity*, and all the *rights* and *privileges* that naturally belong to it. They have *broken* the *tie* by which they ſtood *related*, both in point of common affection and intereſt, to the reſt of mankind. They have engaged themſelves in an independent faction, a pernicious confederacy againſt *univerſal*

verſal right and *publick order*; and diſtinguiſhed and marked themſelves out as foes *to the whole ſpecies*; and are, therefore, moſt juſtly *outcaſts* from human ſociety, and treated, from the great law of *ſelf-preſervation*, and in *neceſſary defence* of property, like other *wild* and *ungovernable* creatures, to a level with whom they have voluntarily degraded themſelves — and whoſe inſtinct of nature it is to *hurt* and to *deſtroy*. SERM. XII.

AND beſides their being, upon this account, declared infamous by the laws of civil government, and expoſed to the unſufferable vengeance of God, the univerſal and righteous judge, whoſe ſoul *hateth the wicked, and him that loveth violence*; they are liable to continual anxieties, and moſt dreadful agonies of guilty remorſe, and have no relief from *within*, nor ſecurity from *without*, while *danger* and *terror* ſurround them on every ſide. Their only *intervals* of what looks like ſelf-enjoyment are, properly ſpeaking, ſcenes of *madneſs*, in which their ſpirits are *unnaturally* inflamed, and lewdneſs and riot, obliterate and extinguiſh *thought*; and which

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which therefore, tho' choſen as mitigations of *preſent pain*, are upon the whole an increaſe of their *guilt* and *miſery*. But when nature is recovered from this *violence*, and has, in ſome meaſure, ſhaken off the *load* that was thrown upon it to *ſuppreſs* its kind and wiſe admonitions; when reaſon is *unfettered*, and begins again to *exert* itſelf; the former diſtractions and inquietudes are *renewed*, and perhaps with redoubled force, for their having been check'd not by *proper lenitives*, but by *criminal debauches*. The offender is forced to retire, from the ſociety and converſe of mankind, for fear of being diſcovered, and made an *open* and and *ignominious* example of publick juſtice. He veils himſelf under the *ſhades* of *night*, and ſteals from one *obſcure* and *baſe* retreat to another; is alarmed upon the leaſt *commotion*; knows that even the perſons, with whom he intruſts his life, can have *no confidence* ſafely repoſed in them; and runs the hazard of being, every moment, betrayed by his companions in *rapine* and *diſhoneſt ſpoil*.

THIS, which has been already repreſented, is

is a ſcene of miſery, to which none of the *natural* and *unavoidable* calamities of life, however *grievous*, nor the *pangs* of *death* itſelf, in the track of virtue and honour, however *violent*, can bear any proportion. But imagine the criminal to be *detected*, and *ſecured* within the reach of juſtice, and freſh *infelicities* (not included in the former frightful catalogue of evils, reſulting from theft and robbery) ariſe, and preſent themſelves to our view. His *agony* ſpringing from *guilt* muſt, at leaſt, be the ſame, and his *fears*, it may be ſuppoſed, will croud more thick and cloſe upon him; and in this *depreſſion* of ſpirit and amidſt the *conflict* of ſuch *confuſed* and *tumultuous* paſſions, how is it poſſible for him to endure the ghaſtly and diſtorted looks of his fellow-criminals *anticipating* their fate, the rattling of *chains*, the horrid aſpect of a ſolitary and rueful *dungeon*, the hourly expectation of *death*, the *gloomy formalities* that *precede* it, the *violent*, *infamous*, *publick* execution; with but little hope, in general, of the *mercy* of God, and too juſt apprehenſions of a future, more dreadful *condemnation*. For

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'tis ſcarce poſſible, for ſuch heinous tranſgreſſors as theſe, to have any good degree of aſſurance of the *ſincerity* of their *repentance*, without which the everlaſting mercies of God are not to be ſecured; ſince their ſorrow and contrition did not *commence*, till Hell and deſtruction were imagined to be *near*, and lay, in a manner, *open* and *naked* before them; and therefore may be ſuſpected to be rather *a mechanical paſſion*, a kind of *inſtinct* occaſioned by the melancholly ſituation to which they have reduced themſelves, than the effect of *conviction* and *ingenuity*, and a real inward diſpoſition of mind *alienated* from their former vices. But ſuppoſing their ſpirits not to be *ſunk* and *darkened* by the leaſt tincture of deſpair; but rather *preſumptuous* and *elate*, and abſolutely *fearleſs* with reſpect to futurity; yet if they are impenitent (of which there is the utmoſt danger) this *unconcern*, this *confident* and *relentleſs* temper, is the circumſtance, in the whole train of their misfortunes, that ought to be moſt ardently deprecated; becauſe, being blinded by ſo fatal an error, their future deſtruction

ſtruction muſt be unavoidable. They enjoy, indeed, a few moments of eaſe and pleaſing fond *deluſion*; which will ſoon vaniſh, and aggravate their *ſucceeding* miſeries. SERM. XII.

WHETHER *any*, who now hear me, are intereſted in this part of my diſcourſe, and have, conſequently, *particular* reaſons to excite them to avoid the tremendous effects of *capital injuſtice*, I know not: I hope, and would preſume, the contrary. But allow me to ſay with reſpect to *this vice*, as I have already intimated in the caſe of *Murder*, that tho' we have, hitherto, been innocent, "we "may have the lurking pregnant *ſeeds* of "it in *other* irregularities which we *ac*-"*tually* indulge." — In *luxury*, for inſtance, the affectation of *preheminence* and *diſtinction* in outward appearance, and an effeminate unbridled purſuit of *pleaſure*; and in the *expence* of publick entertainments, which from the example of the *great* (who may, perhaps, think it more for their honour to trifle away the *ſuperfluities* of their wealth *luxurioufly*, than to lay them out in acts of *ſolid beneficence*)

is

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is become much too general. Theſe things are not only ſhameful and unnatural, but muſt in many inſtances, entangle our affairs, and reduce us to the *meaneſt ſhifts* to ſupport ſuch exorbitancies. And when all *ſafe* expedients fail, there will remain a ſtrong *temptation* (and but *little force* of virtue to *counterbalance* it) to a commiſſion even of the *higheſt degree*, of the crime prohibited in the text. But if there was nothing at all, in this, more than an over-cautious and groundleſs ſuſpicion, the ſubject on which I am now diſcourſing, and this particular branch of it too, would ſtill be of *univerſal* uſe, becauſe *every one*, almoſt, has it in his power to *prevent* ſeveral of the *remote cauſes* of theft and robbery; between which, tho' there may be many *intermediate ſteps* of corruption, yet the *connection* is ſo plain, that they cannot be denied to be an undoubted, and the general, *ſource* of this iniquity. Among theſe I ſhall intimate two of the moſt conſiderable, and which particularly deſerve our notice.

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IN the FIRST, I am to addreſs myſelf to the *needy* and *indigent* part of mankind; who being the *creatures* of God, and deſigned for *immortality*, as much as thoſe who are placed in the moſt exalted and affluent condition, muſt in the character in which I now appear, as an advocate for virtue an *univerſal tie*, and for the *common ſalvation* of all human, reaſonable creatures, be ſet on the foot of an *abſolute equality*. To theſe my advice is, that they take care of the *education* of their children, as far as their ſtation will allow, and inſtill into them, early, principles of religion, and maxims of *juſtice*, from which their abject and narrow circumſtances may ſuggeſt dangerous temptations to *deviate*, and that they train them up to *honeſt labour*, and an *habit* of *induſtry*, and in an averſion to *idleneſs*, the parent of the moſt *extravagant* vices. For if they are thrown into the world *wild* and wholly *undiſciplined*, regardleſs of the ſupreme authority and government of God, and *unimpreſſed* by any ſenſe of the eſſential and immutable difference of good and evil; if they are, in their tender years (when

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(when *all habits* are more eaſily *tempered* with the *ſoft* and *pliant* conſtitution of the mind, and take the *deepeſt root*) *perverted* by the malignant influence of bad examples, and *enured* to vice; 'tis no wonder if they proceed, *gradually*, to all imaginable degrees of *injuſtice* and *violence*. Endeavour, therefore, to prevent their future ſhame, and *untimely* fate, by uſing the proper and wiſe cautions above recommended, which not only religion, but *natural affection*, demands; and conſider, that *honeſty* will procure even to poverty itſelf ſome degree of *reſpect*, and can alone inſpire *content* and *chearfulneſs* of mind, under the *difficulties* and *inconveniencies* that attend it.

AND let ſuch as are in more *ſplendid* and *elevated* life not ſuffer their *pride*, and *wanton inſolence* of ſpirit, ſo far to uſurp authority over their *reaſon*, as to *ridicule* poverty, and treat it as a thing which is *in itſelf deſpicable*; becauſe the *external diſtinctions* between mankind, in this world, were never intended to diſcriminate *merit*, but are, in a great meaſure, *accidental*: And if the poor are as

ill-uſed for what is only their *misfortune*, as they would in many caſes be on account of their *wickedneſs*, they are robbed of that *innate ſhame*, which is one of the moſt powerful and efficacious preſervatives from *licentious* practice, and diſpoſed to conſent, with much leſs inward reluctances to any ſuggeſtions and propoſal of *diſhoneſty*. SERM. XII.

I NOW proceed to the SECOND thing propoſed, *viz.* to point out ſome iniquities in *commerce*, which tho' not univerſally and publickly ſtigmatized by the names of *theft* and *robbery*, yet, upon the abſtract *reaſon* and *foundation* in *nature* of the precept contained in the text, are juſtly ſuppoſed to be forbidden by it. — But againſt this part of my deſign, it is probable an objection may ariſe, and that is, " that there are ſecrets in *trade*, and " in the *methods* of tranſacting buſineſs, " which recluſe moraliſts, and men ad- " dicted to ſpeculation, cannot *penetrate*; " who muſt therefore be very *unqualified* " to determine about the *right* or *wrong*, " the *juſt* or *unjuſt*, conduct, in affairs

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" with which they are in a great meaſure " unacquainted," To which it is ſufficient for me to anſwer, that with *ſecret* things whatever they are, of which I have no diſtinct knowledge, I ſhall not preſume to meddle; nor does my deſign, or the *general* nature of ſuch a diſcourſe as this, at all require it. The caſes which I ſhall put ſhall be clearly ſtated, and *intelligible* to every capacity: So that the point now before us is really not at all — whether we *underſtand* the ſeveral branches of *commerce*; but only this — whether we are *judges* of *equity*. And what ſhould hinder but we *muſt* be ſo, when the *rule* of right is invariably the *ſame*, apply it to what inſtances you pleaſe; and the *application* no more *difficult* in one inſtance than in another, if they are both propoſed with the ſame *diſtinctneſs* and *perſpicuity*. Moſt ſurely the *indifferent* and *diſintereſted* inquirer is, in general, better qualified to form a nice and ſtrict eſtimate, to paſs an upright *unexceptionable* ſentence, than they who are in the very ſcene of corruption, and, perhaps, *perſonally* involved in the guilt of it. The former of theſe, in-

ſtead of being chargeable with preſump- SERM. tion, and *aſſuming* a *right* and *power* of XII. deciſion, where he is not authorized and has not the proper abilities to *decide*, is in truth the very judge, laying open the *facts* themſelves with all their *circumſtances*, to whom they are moſt *aptly* and *naturally* referred. And it may be urged with equal reaſon and juſtice, that *particular branches* of commerce ought never to cenſure the conduct of *other* branches, even tho' it ſhould affect themſelves, and prove detrimental to their own rights; becauſe if trade in general has *ſecrets*, without the knowledge of which, *juſtice* and *injuſtice* cannot in *ſelect* caſes be fixed and aſcertained, particular tribes and aſſociations may, and muſt, be ſuppoſed to have *their* ſecrets likewiſe — to preclude all ſtated unalterable *rules* and *determinations* of *equity*. The conſequences of which will be — " that the behaviour " of mankind has no *certain limits* pre- " ſcribed and marked out for it — that it " is not ſubject to any *uniform law* — that " no one, among its various claſſes, knows " what to *expect* or *claim* from another —

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" and, therefore, that they are quite *a-*
" *liens*, and impoſſible to be reduced to a
" ſtate of *regular dependance* upon each
" other, even when they are united to-
" gether in *ſocieties.*" The whole of which is a plain renunciation of common ſenſe, as well as of the *ſimple*, *ſteady*, *unbending*, *uncorrupted* principles of eternal juſtice. I ſhall add no more than this, that, perhaps, the whole of this *prejudice* has ariſen from the neglect of making one *reaſonable*, and, as I think, *evident* diſtinction, and that is, that *ſtanding rules* of juſtice may be allowed in *every* caſe; but it may not be ſo indiſputable, that *particular inſtances* are *included* within theſe ſtated rules. It may therefore be admitted by the *trader*, that the determination, with reſpect to *kinds* or *general heads* of iniquity, is upon the whole *right*; and it may be admitted by the *moraliſt*, that whether particular *actions* fall *within* this determination, he cannot ſo rightly judge, without the help of thoſe who are better informed of the *nature* of the tranſaction, and of all its *concomitant circumſtances*. This will ſubſerve all the ends

ends of juſtice, and entirely anſwer the purpoſe of my diſcourſe, in which I ſhall only propoſe *general* caſes; and ſhould be glad, too, if they were altogether *fictitious*, rather calculated to *prevent* errors, than *neceſſary* for the correction of abuſes *already* committed. They are all, I believe, reducible to the following heads of — *fraud* — *extortion* — *oppreſſion* — *corruption*, or the *perverting* of *juſtice*. Of each of theſe briefly, and as they ſtand in order.

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AND firſt of *fraud*, which is a ſpecies of injuſtice the direct *oppoſite* to open violence, and ſeeks to *ſhelter* itſelf under ſome ſmooth and ſpecious diſguiſe, that its baſe deſigns may be carried on, and executed, without being known, or mentioned, or even *ſuſpected*; by which means, the contriver and author of the fraud would be, in a great meaſure, cut off from the *confidence* and *friendſhip* of mankind. Such an offender as this, therefore, may for *a long time* maintain a *fair* and *reputable* character; and inſinuate himſelf ſo far, by an affectation of *ſimplicity* and *ſcrupulous juſtice*, and a

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ſeemingly *tender* and *conſcientious* nicety in trifles, into the eſteem of the *unwary*, the *generous*, the *open-hearted*, as may reduce them more within his *power*, and within the *reach* of his *grand* ſcheme of deceit; and give him greater opportunities to practice all the little *arts*, which are *preparatory* and *ſubſervient* to it. And there are a great *variety* of methods, in which the crime of fraud may be committed, and a continued *courſe* of it maintained. The principal of which are *forgery*; the *alienation* of property from its right owner by *ſecret*, *gradual*, and for a conſiderable time (eſpecially where the capital ſum is *large*, and conſiſts of *many articles*) *imperceptible* breaches of truſt; by uſing *falſe weights* and *meaſures*, which, as a manifeſt *infringement* of juſtice, is expreſly declared to be *an abomination to the Lord:* And in inſtances *leſs heeded*, and therefore found by experience to be more *general*, by *falſe* proteſtations about the original *price*, the *ſcarcity*, the *goodneſs* of the reſpective wares and merchandizes offered to ſale; by vending damaged goods, knowing them to be *ſuch*, without a proportionable

portionable *deduction* for the *loſs* that muſt unavoidably be ſuſtained by the buyer; by abuſing his *ignorance*, and impoſing on his too eaſy *credulity*; and which is a moſt heinous *aggravation* of the fraud, by over-reaching our neighbour when he *profeſſes* his own *unſkilfulneſs*, and *refers* himſelf entirely to our ingenuity and ſenſe of honour. Theſe are moſt certain and undeniable caſes of *injuſtice*, as they have now been diſtinctly, tho' *generally*, ſtated. We as plainly *invade* the *property* of another, of which he has the ſole right of *diſpoſal*, convert to *our own* uſe what, in equity, belongs only to *him*, and *ſpoil* him of a part of his poſſeſſions without his *conſent*; as if we attacked and plundered him by *open* and *violent robbery*. There is not one of the *eſſential ingredients* of *theft* wanting in the inſtances above enumerated; which this ſingle conſideration will evince beyond all reaſonable contradiction, that whatever ſhare of our neighbour's *property* we ſeize, and alienate, and get into our own power, without having firſt acquired *a right* to it, and without his having *transferred* to us, *voluntarily*, his own right, muſt be *ſtolen*, if

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the word has any idea at all affixed to it; and no more mild and favourable conſtruction of ſuch injurious conduct can poſſibly be made.

To which let me add, that, by a continued *ſeries* of *little frauds*, greater *miſchief* may, upon the whole, be done to the innocent ſufferer, than by many of the *profeſſed* and *declared* enemies to juſtice and private right; that by ſome *ſingle* frauds, his loſs may riſe much *higher*, and the injury be more *irreparable*, and in its conſequences more *extenſive*; and that as this particular crime is not only ſtealing under *covert*, but under a *profeſſion* and *maſk* of honeſty, the guilt muſt upon that account be highly increaſed; as no impieties are more *deteſtable*, than thoſe which are committed under the outward pretence and *cloak* of religion, which is hereby proſtituted to the moſt degenerate and ignominious purpoſe of *undermining* and *deſtroying* itſelf.

EQUALLY a violation of the command in the text with *fraud*, and an equal contempt and defiance of the original rules of juſtice, is *extortion:* The principal

cipal branch of which, that requires to be particularly mentioned, is the ſcandalous practice of *uſury*, or lending money upon *exorbitant* intereſt. I do not pretend, in what I now advance, to be a judge in all *particular* caſes, but the general *ſtandard* and *meaſure* of right is, I think, indiſputably clear and certain; and that is, "that "when the *intereſt demanded* is ſuch, as "neceſſarily tends to *ruin* the borrower, "and reduce *him* and *his family* to diſtreſs "and poverty, it is a groſs and flagrant "immorality, which no arts or evaſions "can in the leaſt degree juſtify." Should it be ſaid, that the *hazard*, in the inſtance now referred to, is very conſiderable on the ſide of the *lender*, upon which account a greater *ſecurity*, than would otherwiſe be defenſible upon the ſtrict principles of juſtice, is become abſolutely neceſſary: I anſwer, "that *no ſuch ha-* "*zards* ought ever to be run; becauſe all "methods of dealing, from whence the "*diſtreſs* and *ruin* of a fellow-creature "will inevitably follow, are in them-"ſelves, and eternally, *iniquitous*." If this ſerves as a wretched ſhift to *defer* his

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his miſery for a little ſpace, it will fall, at laſt, the *heavier* upon him; and in the mean time he is enabled, by ſuch baſe *uſurious* contracts, to ſupport a ſhatter'd declining *credit*, to *encumber* himſelf with new *debts*, and bring in more perſons as ſufferers, and ſharers in his approaching calamity. So that there is this *peculiar* circumſtance of guilt attending the extortion now complained of, that it *depreſſes* and *preys* upon the *unfortunate*; or ſupplies the *fraudulent* with the means of continuing their frauds; and, in ſhort, is carried on at the expence both of juſtice and humanity, and ſubſiſts by the *ſpoil* of mankind.

As for *oppreſſion* in all the different branches of it — in government, by *exceſſive* and *unneceſſary* taxes — among the great, by *rigorous* exactions from their vaſſals and dependents — among the proprietors of land, by *burdening* their tenants, and not ſuffering them to enjoy the *ſmall profits* of their hard andpenurious induſtry—among all conditions of men, by unreaſonably *abridging*, or *detaining*, the wages of the poor labourer: Theſe, I ſay, are

are inſtances of injuſtice, which, tho' they are too often practiſed, are freely and univerſally exclaimed againſt, and the *cries* of the *helpleſs injured*, who ſeldom have it in their power to redreſs their wrongs, the ſcripture directly informs us, reach the *ears of the Lord of Hoſts*; who will puniſh the unnatural authors of ſuch barbarities, in which *cruelty* ſeems to vie with *injuſtice* and *robbery* which ſhall gain the aſcendant, and give the particular *denomination* to the conduct. SERM. XII.

To which let me add, that we are righteouſly chargeable, and that in a great degree, with breaking this ſacred law of God, *thou ſhalt not ſteal*, if we are any way concerned in the *corruption*, or *perverſion* of juſtice with relation to matters of *property*; or make uſe of any advantages, which we may claim by *law*, to the deſtruction of *natural right*; or if we ourſelves are not immediately concerned as *actors* in either of the ways above-mentioned, *adviſe*, however, and *inſtigate* to deſigns and ſchemes of injuſtice, and ſhare in the unlawful (as to *religion*, and the primitive rule of *nature*, unlawful and infamous)

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famous) *profits* reſulting from thence: And, finally, if we are not diſpoſed, whenever it is in our *power*, to make *ample* reſtitution to thoſe whom we have injured in their property; and ſuch reſtitution too, as may reaſonably be deemed a valuable compenſation, for all the *accidental loſs* and *inconvenience* occaſioned by the wrong committed. Our Bleſſed Saviour, therefore, imputes to *Zacheus*, as the ſureſt token of the *ſincerity* of his repentance, his frank and voluntary declaration, that *if he had wronged any* perſon, he would *reſtore it fourfold*. And indeed ſuch *reſtitution* is one of the firſt dictates of *natural juſtice*; and without it, all our profeſſions of *ſorrow* are ſhameful hypocriſy, ſince, by not *repairing* the injury, we live, as it were, *daily* and *habitually* in the commiſſion of iniquity, and muſt die, and appear before God, not only *impenitent*, but with an additional weight of *corruption* and *guilt* upon our ſouls. I ſhall only ſubjoin, for the concluſion of this diſcourſe, the following hints.

Firſt, That as the inſtances, which have been already ſpecified, may be properly diſtinguiſhed

ſtinguiſhed by the name of *iniquitous* thefts, or thefts proceeding from a direct principle of *injuſtice*, there is another ſort, that may not be unfitly denominated the *theft* of *uncharitableneſs*; and that is the withholding from the poor that ſuccour and kind aſſiſtance, which it is *in the power of our hands* to communicate, and which may juſtly be *expected* from our plentiful and affluent circumſtances. This, indeed, is not a debt that may be *demanded* by any particular poor; but is as ſtrictly *owing* to the indigent in general, and ought to be as exactly *diſcharged*, as any the moſt *preciſe* and *determinate* right of claim — as appears from the *univerſal implanted impulſe* to humanity and compaſſion, and the order, and *mutual relation* of *all human* creatures to one another, eſtabliſh'd by the God of nature. — The SECOND and laſt obſervation that I would briefly mention is, that a *divine* prohibition of *theft*, and all other particular *frauds* and *invaſions* of our neighbour's property, muſt, of neceſſity, imply in it a command to avoid all *leadings*, *incen-*

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tives, and diſtant *tendencies* to ſo enormous a crime; and, as the ſureſt preſervative from it, to cultivate an inviolable *habit of juſtice* in every even the minuteſt article of our *commerce*.

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SERMON XIII.

The DOCTRINE of a PARTICULAR PROVIDENCE conſidered.

REV. xix. 6.

Alleluiah: *For the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.*

THE doctrine of a ſupreme and univerſal providence is not only the immediate ſupport of all *religion*, but alſo the moſt *elevated* and *delightful* object of contemplation, that can poſſibly preſent itſelf to a ſober and uncorrupted mind. Upon the truth or falſhood of this moſt impor-

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important principle, neceſſarily depends the juſt idea of the *univerſe*, and of our own *ſituation* and *character*, our *deſign*, our *buſineſs*, and all our *expectations* in it. As this grand queſtion is decided, the whole ſyſtem of nature muſt appear with a quite *different* face. If the notion of a providence cannot be maintained, the world, to the eye of *reaſon*, muſt ſeem like a *forlorn* and *deſolate* wilderneſs; and we know not to what infinite *irregularities*, to what unavoidable *confuſions* and *miſeries* it may be expoſed, — *horrible* even in the *bare imagination*. It has loſt its vital animating ſpirit; the hope of the *afflicted*, and the main ſupport and conſolation of the *virtuous*, are taken away from them; and the happineſs of *all rational beings* is rendered abſolutely uncertain and precarious. But if the government of an all-perfect mind be once firmly eſtabliſhed; if he conducts the courſe of nature, and regulates the affairs of the univerſe with *invariable* wiſdom and rectitude, with *impartial* equity, with *paternal* goodneſs; from hence muſt naturally ſpring tranquility, and a *ſedate ſublime*

lime ſatisfaction: There can be no im- SERM.
proper or unneceſſary *evil* upon the XIII.
whole; nor the want of any fit and ne-
ceſſary *good.*

And yet, notwithſtanding this, wicked men, being irreconcileably *averſe* to the notion of a providence (becauſe they juſtly apprehend that it involves in it the idea of *moral* government, the *eternal terror* of vice and wilful depravity) and men of bold and preſumptuous ſpeculations, who are bewildered in the intricacies and mazes of blind *metaphyſics*; both of theſe, I ſay, the one from the corruption of their hearts, and the other from the pride of falſe wiſdom, have endeavoured to baniſh *God* out of the univerſe, whoſe *preſence*, and *ſupreme influence* in it, is the only ſource of ſubſtantial comfort and joy to the intelligent part of the creation.

AND *what is it*, that they have ſubſtituted in the place of God; in the place of an all-wiſe and omnipotent director and diſpoſer of events, and a common father? Nothing, in effect, but the utmoſt *anarchy* and wild *diſorder*; nothing, in reality, but *unintelligible jargon*, and

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words without *a meaning*. For it is to *fate*, or *chance*, that we are referred for the *origin* of the univerſe, the *ſupport* of its ſtupendous frame, the *beauty* and *harmony* of the ſeveral parts of it, and for the *exquiſite contrivance*, the *exact* and *regular diſpoſition* of all things in it.

BUT let us not, my brethren, ſuffer ourſelves to be loſt in darkneſs; let us not give up *firſt principles*, for the ſake of *ſounds* that we do not underſtand. Let us aſk ourſelves ſeriouſly — what is that *fate*, which is ſuppoſed to have ſuch a ſurprizing kind of operation, and to produce ſo many curious and wonderful effects. — "Is it *a real principle?* — Is it "*a proper efficient cauſe?* — So far from it that we ſhall find it, upon cloſe examination, to be in the preſent argument juſt *nothing* at all; *i. e.* "to be *no reaſon* of "the exiſtence of *any thing*, nor capable "of affording a ſolid and ſatisfactory *ac*"*count*, of the moſt *minute* and *trivial* "event in nature."

FOR when it is ſaid that all things exiſt, and that the fabric of the world is upheld and maintained, by *fate*, theſe propo-

propoſitions can be interpreted in no other ſenſe than this, that the univerſe *exiſts neceſſarily*; and "that it is abſolutely *im-*
"*poſſible* that *we ourſelves*, or any other
"the moſt *inconſiderable* part of it, ſhould
"*not* have exiſted; and that whatever *is*
"could not *but* happen in *all* reſpects as
"it does; and that, not from conſidera-
"tions of *wiſdom* and the *greater good*
"upon the whole, but from ſome prin-
"ciples *eſſential* to it, and *inherent*
"in its very nature." But is there the leaſt *colour* of reaſon for this abſurd and extravagant paradox? Do not all our ideas, do not our very firſt reflections, aſſure us of the contrary? Is it a contradiction (*abſolutely* and *abſtractly* conſidered) to aſſert, that this *earth*, for example, might never have *exiſted*, or that it might have been *placed* in a *different* part of ſpace, or that it may be entirely *annihilated*? Nay, is it a contradiction to ſuppoſe, that the *meaneſt inſect* in it might either *not* have been, or may *ceaſe* to be? What principle of reaſon *is it*, that this may be ſaid to *contradict*? What certain notion *have we*, to which

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it is *impoſſible* to be *reconciled?* We all know that there is *none* at all; and even the *fataliſt* himſelf muſt be convinced of this, if he would conſult and examine his own *ideas.* And can that exiſt by an intrinſic and immutable *neceſſity* in nature, which, conſidered *in itſelf*, might, upon all our principles of judging and reaſoning, either *never* have been *brought* into exiſtence, or have been *confined* or *limited*, as to the *period* of its exiſtence? If a thing exiſts neceſſarily, muſt not ſome *preciſe mode* of its exiſtence be alſo neceſſary? If we aſſert the contrary, is not this the ſame in effect with ſaying, "That "*it is not* neceſſary it ſhould exiſt in *any* "way, and yet that *it is* neceſſary it "ſhould exiſt in *ſome* way?" Or, if ſome *particular mode* of being be abſolutely and eſſentially neceſſary, as it muſt ſurely be where the *exiſtence itſelf* is neceſſary, how ſhall we *account* for what we conſtantly ſee and experience — That moſt parts of the univerſe, which are expoſed to our obſervation, are in a continual *flux?* How ſhall we *account* for the innumerable *changes* and *variations* to which the conſtitution

ſtitution of nature is ſubject? Theſe are indeed inexplicable *myſteries*, glaring contradictions even to common ſenſe: From whence it appears, that the ſcheme of the *fataliſt* is a blind and bewildered ſcheme, and utterly inſufficient to explain both the *original*, and the *general laws* and *courſe* of nature. SERM. XIII.

WHAT then is *chance?* — Why it is not only *no cauſe*, but, in the ſtrict notion of it, directly *repugnant* to the very *idea* of *caſualties*. For if there be any *adequate cauſe*, of the exiſtence and order of the world, ſubſiſting, we are able from hence to give a *certain* and *determinate reaſon* of its exiſtence and order; and, of conſequence, it could not be formed by *chance*, nor can the affairs and concerns of it be directed and regulated by *chance*. But, on the contrary, if all this be entirely *fortuitous*, it as undeniably follows, that the univerſe can be nothing elſe but a ſeries of *effects* without a *cauſe*, "or "without any *proportionate power*, exiſ- "ting in nature, to *produce* theſe effects." Beſides, — can chance give *uniform* laws to nature? Can chance always operate

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with a *ſteady* and *unvaried* regularity? Can chance, unintelligent roving chance, act with all the *exactneſs* of the moſt conſummate and unerring Wiſdom? Can it be owing to *this*, that ſuch an infinite number of *different* effects *conſpire* in their deſign and uſe? Is it to be imputed to *mere chance*, that but very *rarely* any *irregular* and *monſtrous* productions appear in the univerſe; that we are entertained with the proſpect of *general beauty* and *harmony*; that ſuch a ſcene of wonders, of incomparable *art* and *ſkill*, is exhibited and diſplayed before us, as exceeds, I will not ſay the *imitation*, but even the *comprehenſion* of all mankind, if it could be collected together and united in *one intellect?* And, to ſum up all, muſt it be aſcribed to *mere chance* that we ſee in the whole ſyſtem of creation, *nothing elſe* but marks of the moſt *accurate* and *ſtupendous* workmanſhip, and not the *leaſt reſemblance* of an *accidental* and *fortuitous* production? Whoever can ſo far impoſe upon his underſtanding, as to admit theſe abſurd concluſions, is qualified for being an *infidel* in every thing; and the ſtrong-

eſt

eſt *improbabilities* are not ſufficient to *ſhock* his *incredulity*. And yet by ſuch *ſtupidities* as theſe, groſly affronting to the Creator and ſovereign Lord of univerſal nature, and inſolently contemptuous to the univerſal reaſon of mankind; by theſe, I ſay, we are to be perſuaded to renounce our *belief* of a Deity, and the *pleaſures* and eminent *advantages* reſulting from his being and providence, for the *dull*, the *gloomy*, the *comfortleſs* ſcheme of atheiſm. Whereas, in truth, the juſt inference to be drawn from ſuch extravagant pretenſions is evidently this, that ſince neither *fate* nor *chance* could *make* or *govern* the world, there muſt of neceſſity be *a ſelf-exiſtent*, *intelligent*, and *active* principle, the *firſt cauſe* of all things, and the *director* and *diſpoſer* of events. SERM. XIII.

BUT as it was not my original deſign to inſiſt on the *general proofs* of a providence, in my remarks on which I have already too much enlarged (tho' I hope they will not be without their uſe) I ſhall here put a ſtop to theſe reflections; and proceed to conſider the principal point intended, *viz. how far* the providence of

SERM. XIII. God may be ſuppoſed to *extend*, or, in other words, "*whether*, and in *what caſes*, "it is reaſonable for us to acknowledge "*a particular providence:*" Which is a point of high importance in forming our ſentiments of *religion*, and fixing the true idea of the ſtate of *the univerſe* in general, and of *human life*. — Now in order to avoid confuſion, and ſet this argument in a proper light, it is only neceſſary that I do theſe two things. FIRST of all ſhew briefly, what is *meant* by *a particular providence:* And, SECONDLY, lay before you the ſtrong *probabilities*, that may be urged in *ſupport* of this doctrine.

THE FIRST thing to be done is, to enquire briefly what is meant by a *particular* providence. And in order to this, it is proper to ſhew what is intended by God's *general* providence; which is thought, by many, fully to anſwer all the purpoſes both of *natural* and *moral* government, and, of conſequence, to exclude a particular interpoſition. It is ſtated thus — "that the infinite and all-wiſe "Creator of the univerſe formed the con-"ſtitution of nature ſo *perfect* at *firſt*, as "to

" to ſtand in need of no ſucceſſive regu- SERM.
" lation; that he eſtabliſhed *certain laws* XIII.
" in the material world, which *uniform-*
" *ly* and *invariably* take place in it; that
" he endowed it with *intrinſic* powers
" to *produce* all the ordinary and regular
" effects which he ever intended it *ſhould*
" produce: Juſt as when an Artificer
" frames a *machine* for *certain* purpoſes,
" and to endure to a *limited* duration; in
" all which period, the effects, which
" reſult from it, ſpring not from the *im-*
" *mediate* direction and influence of the
" artiſt himſelf, but from the *force* of
" its own *original* compoſition." This is the ſubſtance of their ſcheme who are entirely, and *excluſively*, for a general providence: Upon which the following remarks, that are preparatory to the main argument, naturally preſent themſelves.—*Firſt*, that it is impoſſible to prove from any principles of *reaſon*, that this is the *actual* ſtate of things. For how can we know that the moſt common events ſpring from properties and powers *fixed* and *inherent* in the conſtitution itſelf, without being acquainted with its *internal frame*, and with

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with the *proper* and *neceſſary* effects of *all* natural cauſes. — But, *Secondly*, it is impoſſible for us to prove (if we admit that this is the general ſtate of the caſe) that it is the *whole* of the caſe; unleſs we are ſure, that the ſupreme governor of the world can have *no wiſe ends* and purpoſes to ſerve, but what are perfectly provided for in the *original* diſpoſition and frame of nature. — From whence it follows, in the *third* place, that no concluſive *objection* can be raiſed, from the *reaſon* of things, againſt a *particular* providence; that all the *preſumptions* and *probabilities*, which are found to be on the *ſide* of a *particular* providence, muſt remain in their full force, being counter-balanced, or even diminiſhed, by *none at all* on the *other* ſide: And this muſt render every probability, that can be urged for the doctrine which I am now recommending, ſo much the more ſtrong and conſiderable.

BUT it may ſtill be aſked, what is that *particular providence*, which you intend to vindicate? To which I anſwer, that it conſiſts in this; "that the ſupreme "Being, upon ſpecial occaſions, *directs*

"and

" and *over-rules* the courſe of *events*, both in the natural and moral world, by an *immediate* influence, to anſwer the great deſigns of his univerſal govern-" ment."—And what reaſons there are, to induce us to believe and acknowledge *this*, is the *ſecond* point, that now comes in order to be conſidered. SERM. XIII.

IN the *firſt* place then, *no* ſuppoſition is, in general, ſo *honourable* to the perfect wiſdom and rectitude of the Deity as this, that upon all occaſions, which *require* it, he conducts and guides the *courſe* of *nature* in ſuch a manner, as to make it ſubſervient to the moſt *beneficial* purpoſes. — Nor will this introduce any *appearance* of *confuſion* in the univerſe, becauſe we can eaſily imagine that the all-perfect Author of it can *ſuſpend*, *moderate*, or *mix* the influence of natural cauſes, without making any *viſible* alteration in the order of nature, or its general eſtabliſhed laws. What are the *firſt ſprings* of the moſt *common* events we *know not*; in numberleſs caſes, at leaſt, they are abſolutely *imperceptible* by us: And therefore we can never diſcover, when they are

touched

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touched and *managed* by the ſupreme diſpoſing mind; it is out of our power, on ſuch occaſions as theſe, to perceive any thing *irregular*, or any thing *uncommon*.

LET me add to confirm this doctrine, in the *ſecond* place, that it may be *queſtioned*, whether any ſuch laws *could* be *originally* fixed in the univerſe, as without an *immediate* direction and interpoſition of the Deity upon ſome ſpecial occaſions, can *poſſibly* anſwer all the ends of government with reſpect to *mankind* in *this life*; conſidered both as *moral* and *accountable* beings in a ſtate of *trial*, and as united together in *ſocieties*: "For "how a *certain* and *neceſſary* courſe of "things can be compleatly and minutely "*adapted* to the infinitely *various* and *un*-"*certain* paſſions, deſigns, and purſuits of "*free agents* is extremely hard to be con-"ceived." Muſt there then be *no* providence, *no* ſupreme regulation with reſpect to *ſuch events* as theſe? This, ſurely, is a very unreaſonable and obſtinate concluſion.

BUT,

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BUT, farther, *thirdly*, we find that the Creator of the world has put it even in the power of *men*, by a proper *application* and *conjunction* of *ſeveral* natural cauſes, to produce very *ſurpriſing*, very *beneficial* effects, "which would *not* have been "produced, if theſe cauſes had remained "*diſtinct*, as they lie in the *original* "*conſtitution*, without the interpoſition "of human art and induſtry." Is it not, then a moſt abſurd *limitation* of the wiſdom and omnipotence of the Deity, (which can bring about infinitely more important events, by a *ſuitable combination* of various cauſes, in every part and diſtrict of nature; is it not, I ſay, a moſt abſurd limitation of God's wiſdom and omnipotence, to diſpute againſt *ſuch interpoſitions* as theſe (which are all actings of a *particular providence*) when we ourſelves can eaſily conceive, "that the go-"vernment of the world may, upon *this* "ſuppoſition, be more *wiſely* conducted, "and anſwer many more *valuable* pur-"poſes than it can *otherwiſe* do."—A

concur-

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concurrence of cauſes *united* by a ſkilful direction, but for which *union* there is perhaps, in innumerable inſtances, *no proviſion* made in *nature*; ſuch a *concurrence* of cauſes, I ſay, *adapted* to particular circumſtances may be the means of effecting unexpected and great *revolutions* for the good of *ſociety*, and *of mankind in general*. And as theſe *revolutions*, and the *benefits* reſulting from them, would in all probability not have *taken place*, were it not for the exerciſe of *a particular providence*; this demonſtrates not only how reaſonable it is for us to *admit* it *here*; but to *preſume* the ſame in many *other* caſes, where it may be equally *neceſſary*, tho' that neceſſity lies more *remote* from our dark and limited conceptions.

I SHALL only add at preſent, that the Holy Scriptures aſſert, in the ſtrongeſt terms, the *univerſal extent* of God's providence, and his diſpoſal of *all events*, throughout the whole ſcope of created being. — That *the* LORD *hath prepared his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom ruleth over all* — that the higheſt orders

Pſalm ciii. 19.

ders of intelligent ſpirits have the *honour* to act as *his miniſters*, to execute his wiſe and gracious councils--with reſpect to this globe, that his providence is in a particular manner concerned about *mankind*, ſtrictly regarding *the evil and the good*; but that it is not confined to *them*, but reaches to *every part* even of the *ſenſitive* and *inanimate* creation: For he *openeth his hand, and ſatisfieth the deſire of every living thing*; *not a ſparrow falls to the ground without your father*; and *the very hairs of your head are all numbered* — and that with reſpect to the ſupreme mind, who comprehends at one view the *whole courſe* of things, and perfectly underſtands the *force* and *efficacy* of *all natural cauſes*, nothing can be *fortuitous* and *accidental*; but what are commonly ſtiled *accidental* effects muſt be as intirely ſubject to his *direction* and *controul*, as the moſt *obvious* effects of the *plaineſt* neceſſary cauſes: For even when *the lot is caſt into the lap, the whole diſpoſing thereof* is *of the* LORD.

Pſal. cxlv. 16. Matt. x. 29, 30. Prov. xvi. 33.

THIS is the doctrine of *revelation*; in which it only confirms, and renders more autho-

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authoritative, the ſenſe and voice of *nature*. For as, on the one hand, the government of the univerſe cannot be a taſk too *difficult* for infinite wiſdom and omnipotence to manage; ſo, on the other, we have the utmoſt reaſon to conclude, that nothing will be thought *beneath* the *notice* and *care* of the Deity, that tends to illuſtrate the glory of his *moral excellencies*, and eſpecially the amiable glory of his *goodneſs*, which is the chief perfection even of a ſupremely intelligent and infinite nature. — But the more particular diſcuſſion of this ſubject muſt be reſerved to my next diſcourſe.

SER-

SERMON XIV.

The DOCTRINE of a PARTICULAR PROVIDENCE considered.

REV. xix. 6.

Alleluiah: *For the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.*

THE providence of God being the *ſupport* of the frame and order of the world, and as it were the *life* of univerſal nature, the devout and joyful *adoration* of it is repreſented in the text, with the higheſt propriety, as one part of the *imploy-*

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ment, one principal and eſſential part of the *happineſs* of the bleſſed inhabitants of *heaven*; not only of *mankind* in this future ſtate of their exaltation and glory, when they ſhall have their faculties extended, their conceptions more clear, ſtrong, and adequate, and be purged from moral impurities; but alſo of the moſt *exalted orders* of intelligent ſpirits. This deſcribes to us the *beſt* and *nobleſt* part of the Creation in its true beauty and rectitude; joining, in one uninterrupted and harmonious conſort, to celebrate the *univerſal dominion* of the Almighty, and his *ſtupendous acts* of government.

EVEN in *this life*, indeed, we have light enough afforded us to diſcern in general, that there *is*, and *muſt be*, a ſupreme diſpoſal and regulation of events; and that we have the utmoſt reaſon to *acquieſce* in the operations of an omnipotent power, when a wiſdom that is infinite, and a goodneſs that is equal, impartial, unconfined, and immutable, always *direct* and *meaſure* the exertions of it. But with reſpect to the *ſcheme* of providence itſelf,

itſelf, which is ſo *vaſt* and *comprehenſive*; with reſpect to the *immediate cauſes*, and *various uſes*, of innumerable effects which we ſee produced; with reſpect to the *amplitude* and *order* of the whole deſign, and the *ſubordination* and admirable *connection* of its various parts, how many ways *each* may tend to the advancement of it, and frequently, perhaps, by ſuch *obſcure* and *far-diſtant* conſequences, as are impoſſible to be *traced* by a finite underſtanding: And, to add no more, with reſpect to the *exact proportions* of nature, and the *due temperament* of different cauſes, by which means they will be brought, in the end, to *terminate* in one grand point, and be *united* in their influence. — Here, I ſay, our apprehenſions muſt of neceſſity be indiſtinct and confuſed.

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AND yet, tho' this be an undeniable truth, and cannot *poſſibly* be otherwiſe from the very *nature* of things, it appears to have but little weight in regulating the conduct of mankind. The incomprehenſibleneſs of a ſubject is no check to their *preſumption*; their *cavils* are not eaſily

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silenced, even in cases where they have *no principles* of reasoning; they censure because they are *ignorant*; they grow profane and sceptical in proportion as they are *peevish* and *impatient*, in proportion as for want of *ideas*, and thro' a mere blind and childish *resentment*, they are displeased with the *general constitution* of the universe, or dissatisfied with their own *rank* and *circumstances* in it. Whereas, on the contrary, the more perfectly any being is enabled to *pursue* the *track* of providence; the more this wonderful scene is *enlarged* and *opened* to his view; the more *clearly* he *perceives* the *absurd consequences* that follow from the *Atheistic* scheme, which attributes the formation and government of the world to *fate* or *chance*; the more *distinctly* he can *enumerate* the *vast advantages* resulting from the inspection and care of an universal over-ruling mind, and point out the *mischiefs* and *confusions*, that would inevitably spring from a state of *entire anarchy*, with respect to the *moral* world, and the *immense system* of nature: He must, of course, feel himself inspired with more

more exalted and tranſporting ſentiments of *delight* and *praiſe*. — A mind thus *enlightned*, a heart *thus affected*, would naturally expreſs its ſurprize, its joy, and lowly reverent adoration in the language of the text: Alleluiah: *For the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.*

BUT it is ſcarce of more importance to us to believe that there *is* a providence, than to enquire how far it may reaſonably be ſuppoſed to *extend*: I therefore, in my laſt diſcourſe, laid before you ſeveral ſtrong probabilities for the doctrine of a *particular providence*. But there is one topic that, I think, deſerves to be diſtinctly and fully illuſtrated; and that is the *particular interpoſition* of the ſupreme Being, as it may directly and immediately reſpect *moral agents*: Which tho' it be a point of great weight in the preſent argument, and of the utmoſt conſequence to virtue and religion, thoſe who have oppoſed a particular providence have been too apt to *overlook*. — So that they have either not rightly *underſtood*, or the leaſt we can ſay is, that they have not fairly *ſtated* and exa-

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examined, the doctrine, which they would be thought to have diſproved. For if the *ſingle* principle, which is intended for the ſubject of the following diſcourſe, can be eſtabliſhed on good probabilities, all their reaſonings, ſo far as they are deſigned *abſolutely* to diſcard the notion of *a particular providence*, muſt be weak and inconcluſive. Let us then enquire,

IN the FIRST place, how far in *general*, and in what *particular* inſtances, God may influence the *minds* of men, in order to ſerve the wiſe and gracious purpoſes of his providential government; and what *reaſons* there are to induce us to believe, that there is *actually* ſuch an influence: After which it will be proper to ſhew,

IN the SECOND place, that *this alone*, *excluſive* of all immediate influence on neceſſary cauſes, and the laws eſtabliſhed in the material world, will conſtitute *a particular providence* of vaſt *extent*, and of great *effect* with relation both to private and public happineſs.

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THE FIRST thing propoſed was to enquire, how far in *general*, and in what *particular* inſtances, God may influence the *minds* of men, in order to ſerve the wiſe purpoſes of his providential government; and what *reaſons* there are to induce us to believe, that there is *actually* ſuch an influence. — That the ſupreme and infinite Being *may* have an immediate and eaſy *acceſs* to the human mind, whenever he pleaſes, is beyond all reaſonable contradiction. As he originally formed it, he muſt be thoroughly acquainted with its *internal frame*; with the *ſtrength* and *extent* of its faculties in *each individual*; with all the *different ways* in which it is capable of being *impreſſed*; and with what *variety*, and *degree* of *force*, impreſſions may be excited and fixed in it, conſiſtently with the *natural* and *regular exerciſe* of its moral powers, and its *deſign* and *uſe* in the Creation. And whatever his infinite wiſdom knows to be *poſſible*, whatever it ſees in any ſuppoſeable circumſtance to be *fit* and *expedient*, his boundleſs and un-

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controulable power must enable him to *effect*. There is not therefore the least difficulty in admitting, that the first cause of all things *can* influence the minds of men; but whether he ever *will*, whether he ever *does*, act in this manner, *these* are the only questions. Now I think there are several clear *probabilities*, to one that considers the matter impartially, on the side of *allowing* this influence, which cannot be so much as pretended to by those who *oppose* it: And, of consequence, it must appear much more *credible* on the common principles of *reason*, without the additional light and evidence of *revelation*, than the contrary scheme.

AND, in the *first* place, that many *wise* purposes may be served by such an *influence*, is in general easy to be conceived, even by our shallow and limited understandings. "For the *mind* being the "*spring* of all human actions, whatever "*influences* its judgments, counsels, and "determinations, must *proportionably* in-"fluence the *state* of human affairs; and "may, in some instances, direct and re-

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"gulate the *greateſt* and moſt *important* "events." By God's interpoſing, in particular caſes, to moderate, and govern the *views*, *diſpoſitions*, and *paſſions* of mankind, the *courſe* of the world may in many reſpects be vaſtly *different*, from what it would *otherwiſe* have been: "Great *evils* may be prevented — extenſive and laſting *benefits* procured — a "*variety* of *uſeful ends* may be anſwered "with reſpect to particular moral agents, "and public communities" — ends, which *without* ſuch a direction of providence would in all probability *never* have been attained, or have been ſerved but very *imperfectly*; if not entirely *defeated* by ill-concerted projects, and the prevalence of unruly paſſions. And this alone muſt afford a juſt and fair preſumption, that there *actually is* ſuch a divine overruling influence as I am now diſputing for; unleſs there be ſome other principles of *reaſon* of *ſuperior*, or at leaſt of *equal* weight, to induce us to believe the contrary; which, I hope, it will appear, from

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from the whole of this diſcourſe, that there *are not*, and perhaps *cannot be*.

NOTHING can be a more certain and unconteſtable truth than this, "that if "God governs the *moral* world *at all*, he "muſt do it in the moſt *perfect* manner; "*i.e.* by ſuch methods, as are moſt worthy "his infinite *wiſdom* and *goodneſs*." If therefore we have ground to ſuppoſe, that *wiſe* purpoſes may be ſerved by directing and influencing the *minds* of men, which in all probability could *not* have been executed, by leaving them entirely to the courſe of their own *ſchemes* and *reflections*; and for which it does not appear (conſidering the *indeterminable variety* of circumſtances, that attend *free agents*) how any *certain proviſion* could be made, in the original laws and ſtanding courſe of *nature*: We muſt have equal ground to believe, that this direction and influence is *one branch* of God's *moral* providence; becauſe this belief gives us a more *exalted* and *honourable* idea of the *government* of the all-perfect Being, than the oppoſite opinion can poſſibly do; "and

"every

" every *wiſe end*, that may, upon the whole, be promoted by ſuch *a particular providence*, muſt in the neceſſary nature of things be *a reaſon*, why it ſhould *actually* take place." SERM. XIV.

AGAIN, it will, I make no doubt, be eaſily admitted, that " the government " of God is properly ſuited to the *natures* of thoſe beings who are the ſubjects of it, and adapted to their peculiar *exigencies*." Otherwiſe the matter will amount to much the ſame, as if they were entirely *neglected*, and left without *any government* at all. But it is certain in general, that the affairs of *mankind*, in which there are, and it is highly probable ever will be, infinite *variations* and *inequalities* that cannot be imagined, without deſtroying their *free agency*, to be abſolutely *fixed*; the affairs of *mankind*, I ſay, cannot, for this reaſon, be regulated by the *ſame kind* of eſtabliſhed laws as obtain in the *material* world: And conſequently with reſpect to *theſe*, an *immediate interpoſition* ſeems to be extremely natural, if not upon ſome occaſions *neceſſary* to

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to be ſuppoſed. And if we conſider farther, that man in innumerable inſtances is *blind* and *helpleſs* in himſelf, ignorant of his true *preſent* happineſs or miſery, and of the proper means to ſecure the one, and avoid the other; that what *appears* to him moſt *worthy* to be *choſen* may frequently be attended with deplorable and pernicious *conſequences*, and *terminate* in the abſolute fruſtration of his beſt and moſt honourable deſigns; and that the *effects* of his conduct, tho' utterly *unſuſpected* by himſelf, may involve *himſelf*, his *family*, his *friends*, the *ſociety* to which he belongs, in ſuch calamities, as may not *end* even *here*, but be tranſmitted down to *late poſterity* — Can we imagine, that the *happineſs* or *miſery* of the world is thus left to be *determined* by *private* follies and indiſcretions, or even by a miſtake in *public* councils, without any *ſuperior* care and regulation? Is it not more agreeable to our beſt and moſt perfect notions of the Deity to ſuppoſe, that he ſometimes, by a *ſecret* and *inviſible* influence, is the means of preventing that

that confuſion that would be introduced by wild ſchemes and paſſions, and inſpires wiſdom and reſolution to bring about great events, that tend to the happineſs of mankind? SERM. XIV.

ADD to all this, that a very conſiderable part of the good and evil, that happens in the world, is evidently cauſed by the determinations and actions of *men*. And as this good and evil is the reſult of *free agency*, we can have no conception, how it is poſſible for the *proportions* of both to be *regulated* and *rightly balanced*, without introducing, upon *ſome* occaſions, the exerciſe of a *ſpecial* and *immediate* influence; how it is poſſible that they ſhould be *balanced* in *ſuch* a manner, not only as the *good* of *ſocieties*, but as even a *proper* ſtate of *moral diſcipline* may require. And as the *chief end* of the divine adminiſtration can juſtly be imagined to be nothing elſe, but the *rectitude* and *happineſs* of the moral world, this ſtrongly confirms all the other reaſonings, that have been before made uſe of, for a *particular* direction

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direction and regulation of their principles, diſpoſitions, and purſuits.

BUT then it muſt be allowed, that there are certain *limitations* with which this matter muſt be underſtood. *No ſuch* influence ſhould be admitted, as deſtroys the *moral character* of man; *no ſuch continual* influence, in all *common* caſes, as is unneceſſary, and renders his *rational faculties* uſeleſs; not a *mechanical* and *neceſſitating* influence, but ſuch alone as is *intellectual* and *perſuaſive*; and, finally, *no ſuch influence* with reſpect to *evil* actions, as makes the Deity the *efficient cauſe* and *author* of them, or the *tempter* and *exciter* to vice and immorality, and, conſequently, ſtains and diſhonours the eſſential and ſpotleſs *purity* of his nature. With theſe *reſtraints* carefully attended to, and kept always in view, the doctrine of a divine interpoſition and influence, with reſpect to the *minds* of men, is agreeable to all the dictates of pure and uncorrupted *reaſon*. And nothing can be *ſo ſuitable* to the character of God, as a Being abſolutely perfect, the *Creator*, *governor*,

vernor, *father*, and *friend* of mankind, nothing *ſo exactly agrees* with his *concern* for the *happineſs* of his creatures, and peculiar *delight* and *complacency* in *virtue*, as that ſcheme; which ſuppoſes him, by a gentle and gracious communication with the *mind*, to aſſiſt *penitent* ſinners in reforming their evil habits; to ſtrengthen the reſolution of the *good* and *virtuous*, and render their duty eaſy and delightful; to ſupply inward ſtrength for *extraordinary trials*, and inward ſupport and comfort in *ſpecial exigencies*; to lay reſtraints on *intemperate* paſſion, and divert from *hurtful* purpoſes. "And *all this* may be "done by ſuggeſting *proper thoughts* to "the mind in a *clear* and *ſtrong* light, "and with only that *degree* and *force* of "impreſſion, which is naturally adapted "to counterbalance contrary *prejudices*, "and excite and fix the *attention*." — A *clear view* of *advantage*, or of great *inconvenience* and *miſery*, of the *amiableneſs* and *honour* of one courſe, and of the *ſhame* and *infamy* of another, of the improbability of *ſucceſs*, the irreparable miſchiefs

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of a *disappointment*; these things, I say, and such other *general* principles by which the minds of men are *influenced*, will check the *passions*, animate or divert a *present* resolution, inspire *new* purposes, alter our *opinion* of particular methods of action which we were before intent upon: "And consequently this is the *main part*, "if not the *whole*, of that *internal influ-* "*ence*, which is necessary to be admitted "in the general course of God's *moral* "providence."

FROM whence it follows, that it may be carried on in a way perfectly agreeable to the *make* and *constitution* of the human mind, and consistent with the *due* and *regular* exercise of its *inherent faculties*. "Nay, it is entirely *analogous* to "what we know to be the *common course* "of things, in the *visible constitution* of "nature; in which it was *originally in-* "*tended* and *provided*, that mankind "should mutually offer *arguments*, sug- "gest powerful and determining *motives*, "*inform*, *convince*, and *persuade* each "other; nay, in which it was *originally*

"*pro-*

" *provided*, that ſuch occurrences ſhould
" frequently happen, as will, notwith-
" ſtanding our utmoſt *reluctance* and *a-*
" *verſion* to it, *engage* our *attention*, and
" almoſt *conſtrain* and *force* us to *reflect*."
And the *influence* of *God* upon the mind, in the way in which it has been above explained, is of the *ſame kind*; perſuaſive, ſtrong, and awakening; and whatever *difference* there may be ſuppoſed to be in the *propriety* of the methods of conviction, and the *degree* of light and evidence, yet we find, by experience, that it is ſcarce ever to be *diſtinguiſhed* from the ſuggeſtions and operations of our *own reaſon*, and that we are ſtill left to our own *choice* and *determination*, and conſequently to the *perfect* exerciſe of our *natural* liberty. So that it does not appear to be in the leaſt inconſiſtent with the eſtabliſhed *laws* of nature, but may *itſelf*, for all that we are capable of advancing to the contrary, be *one* of its eſtabliſhed *ſecret* laws; and no valid objection can be made to it, from any of the *fixed* rules of

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divine government, nor from any *certain* principles of reaſon. I now proceed, (having ſaid enough on the FIRST head, *viz.* how *far* a divine influence on the minds of men may be allowed in *general*, and to what *particular* caſes extended) to ſhew,

IN the SECOND *place*, that *this alone*, *excluſive* of all *immediate* influences on *neceſſary* cauſes, and the laws eſtabliſhed in the *material* world, will conſtitute a *particular providence* of vaſt *extent*, and of great *effect* with relation both to private and public happineſs. — It may not only *affect*, in its *conſequences*, many conſiderable inſtances of happineſs *here*; but extend its beneficial influence to the *future* world, and remain, in the pleaſures and advantages reſulting from it, to *all eternity*. — It may have a great ſhare in *fixing* the *ſtate* of our fellow-creatures; the *temper* of whoſe minds, the forming of their *manners*, their *ſucceſs*, *proſperity*, and *honour*, may very much depend on our *reſolutions* and *courſe* of *action*: For the happineſs of men is not wholly determined by *their own* diſpoſitions and behaviour;

behaviour; but ſprings in a great meaſure from their *ſituation*, and from the qualities and purſuits of *thoſe* to whom they are moſt ſtrictly *united*, and with whom they are called to *converſe*. And an *influence* that is at firſt entirely *perſonal*, and where the ſubject of it, too, is of an *obſcure* character, may not only expand and dilate itſelf to *great multitudes*; but ſettle, at laſt, after ſeveral *intermediate* events impoſſible to be traced, in flagrant and grand *events*, that are of the higheſt concern and importance to *whole ſocieties*.---- Add to all this, that impreſſions made on *ſeveral* different minds, at *one* juncture, may produce *effects* neither *intended* nor *foreſeen* by either of the immediate agents; but, at the ſame time, effects that are *critical*, and, in the utmoſt degree, *momentous* and *uſeful*. And all may be owing to their being introduced at *proper ſeaſons*, and *uniting* their *influence*; and if the interpoſition had failed but in *one* of theſe inſtances, the *whole deſign* might have been render'd abortive. A proper and ſeaſonable addreſs to the minds of *princes*, eſpecially,

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To conclude: The doctrine of the text, as it has been particularly and largely illuſtrated in this and the foregoing diſcourſe, is an undeniable reaſon for the moſt ſolemn and conſtant *reverence* of the Supreme Being, on whom we abſolutely depend. It teaches us, likewiſe, that our only *ſecurity* lies in his protection, and in being

being the objects of his gracious regard: for, otherwiſe, by innumerable *caſualties*, againſt which we cannot *defend* ourſelves, he can fruſtrate all our *ſchemes*, and blaſt all our *pleaſures*. We learn, that *the preparation of the heart in man, and the anſwer of the tongue, is of the* LORD; that even *the* king's *heart is in the hand of the* LORD, and as *the rivers of water he turneth it, which way ſoever he pleaſeth*; that *the* LORD *increaſeth the nations, and deſtroyeth them, he inlargeth the nations, and ſtraitneth them again*; that *he doth according to his will in heaven, and in the earth, in the ſeas, and in all deep places; in whoſe hand our breath is, and whoſe are all our ways.* — So that in *all* circumſtances, whether proſperous or adverſe, we ſhould acknowledge the *wiſe appointment* of the great *inviſible* diſpoſer of events; and, conſequently, be thankful to him for every inſtance of proſperity, and patient and humble under afflictive viſitations. If we thus diſcharge the proper duties of every ſtate and condition of life, and are diligently imployed in the practice of univerſal virtue, we may not only *rejoice* in

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the *general notion* of God's over-ruling providence, but in the comfortable proſpect of its ſpecial *direction* and *favour*; and may each of us ſay, in the ſublime and triumphant language of the prophet Habakkuk—*Although the fig-tree ſhall not bloſſom, neither ſhall fruit be in the vines, the labour of the olive ſhall fail, and the fields ſhall yield no meat, the flock ſhall be cut off from the fold, and* there ſhall be *no herd in the ſtalls*, [i. e. tho' there be the utmoſt *diſtreſs*, *confuſion*, and *deſolation* in nature] *yet I will rejoice in the* LORD, *I will joy in the God of my ſalvation.*

Habakk. iii. 17, 18.

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SERMON XV.

Of the UNITY of GOD; and the JEWISH THEOCRACY.

Exodus xx. 1, 2, 3.

And God ſpake all theſe words, ſaying: I am the LORD *thy God, who have brought thee out of the Land of* Egypt, *out of the houſe of Bondage——Thou ſhalt have no other Gods before Me.*

THE collection of ſacred laws, ſtiled the *Decalogue*, was immediately and directly given *only* to the *Iſraelitiſh* or *Hebrew* nation. From whence it unavoidably follows, that the precepts therein con-

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BUT as there can be no juſt ground to doubt that this is really the caſe with reſpect to *all* theſe laws, (that ſingle one excepted which enjoins the ſanctification of the *ſeventh-day ſabbath*) as, I ſay, there can be no juſt ground to doubt, but that all the reſt are eſſential parts of *natural*

and *Chriſtian* morality; they may juſtly be conſidered in a more extended light, than that of their being *interwoven* with a *particular conſtitution* adapted to confined and lower purpoſes, and as the *everlaſting laws* of the king of heaven. They were proclaimed indeed from mount *Sinai*, with ſuch circumſtances of *pomp* and *terror*, as are rather a natural means to extort a *political* obedience, than to raiſe and improve a *religious* and *moral* temper; but are addreſſed to us in a way of more *free* and *calm perſuaſion*. And the author of the epiſtle to the *Hebrews* has expreſly mentioned it, as a mark of *ſuperior excellence* in the goſpel-diſpenſation; that we *are not come unto the mount—that burned with fire, nor unto blackneſs, and darkneſs, and tempeſt, and the ſound of* the *trumpet* of thunder, *and the voice of words; which* voice *they that heard, intreated that the word ſhould not* [with that ſtupendous majeſty, and convulſion of nature] *be ſpoken to them any more.—And ſo terrible was the ſight*, that even Moſes *ſaid, I exceedingly fear and quake.*

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Hebr. xii. 18,19,21.

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THE firſt branch of the text is the *hiſtorian*'s ſuperſcription to the whole ten commandments: *God ſpake all theſe words*----that incomprehenſibly glorious being, who is *truly* and *only* God; not an *imaginary*, but a *ſelf-exiſtent* and *immutable*, not a *nominal* or *topical*, but the *ſovereign* and *univerſal* Deity; whoſe perfection is abſolute, and his dominion as extenſive as the creation itſelf; nay, which reaches, beyond the utmoſt verge of nature, through the *immenſities* of *ſpace*, and over *all* not only the *actual exiſtences*, but the *poſſibilities* of things.—*God ſpake all theſe words*, whoſe *authority* none can controul; and from whom there is no *appeal* to a ſuperior tribunal. The *intrinſic* and *natural excellence* of the doctrine proved it to be *worthy* of God; and the miraculous *cloud of glory* indicating ſome inviſible and majeſtic *preſence*, together with the *extraordinary commotion* and *perturbation* in the courſe of nature, manifeſtly diſcovered his *immediate interpoſition*. For if ſuch wiſe and uſeful precepts, adapted ſolely for the advancement of virtue and happineſs, might be ſo *glo-*

rioufly and *ſolemnly* atteſted by *deluſive* or *capricious* ſpirits, taking the advantage of their being *inviſible*, and ſuperior in *ſagacity* and *power* to mankind; it will be impoſſible for the ſovereign commander and diſpoſer of nature himſelf, whatever *exigencies* may occur, to *reveal* his will in a preternatural way, (and with *unexceptionable* credentials) to his reaſonable creatures. Which is a ſuppoſition quite unworthy his infinite foreſight, and wiſe regulation of all the affairs of the world, and his concern for the univerſal good. SERM. XV.

BUT it is here to be obſerved, that *Moſes* has only informed us in general, that *God ſpake all theſe words*; but has given us no account by what *inſtruments* the precepts of the decalogue were ſo awfully publiſhed to the whole congregation of *Iſrael*. This defect muſt therefore be ſupplied from the writings of the New Teſtament; in which the law of the ten commandments is ſtiled *the word ſpoken by angels*. The *angels* could in no poſſible ſenſe be ſaid to *ſpeak* it, if God himſelf *immediately* declared this law; but *God* by a very uſual figure, well known in all languages, might Heb. ii. 2.

be

SERM. XV. be denominated and conſidered as the *ſpeaker*, if theſe angels ſpoke only in *his name*, and by a *commiſſion* and *authority* derived from *him*. This therefore muſt be admitted as the *true* interpretation; ſince it is the *only one*, that can be thought of, to reconcile theſe ſeeming contradictions. But amongſt *the angels*, by whoſe adminiſtration the law was given at mount *Sinai*, it is evident to a demonſtration that *Chriſt* is not to be included; becauſe the author of the epiſtle to the *Hebrews* inſiſts upon this, to prove that the *Goſpel* is a more excellent inſtitution than the

Heb. ii. 3. law — that it was *ſpoken by the Lord*: Which would not bear the leaſt face of reaſon, but be a manifeſt confutation of itſelf, "if the *law* was *alſo* ſpoken by the "*ſame Lord*." As therefore, upon the principles eſpouſed by all *Chriſtians*, it muſt be ſome *created angel* by whom theſe words were utter'd, *I am* Jehovah *thy God*; and as it would be extremely abſurd to ſuppoſe *that angel*, merely on the account of his pronouncing theſe words in the *name* of the great and ſelf-exiſtent *Jehovah*, to be *Jehovah himſelf*;

it

it neceſſarily follows, that the ſame *conſtruction*, and the ſame kind of *reaſoning*, muſt in every *other* controverſy be *weak* and *inconcluſive*. SERM. XV.

IMMEDIATELY after the *hiſtorian*'s introduction, follows the declaration of *God himſelf*, thus expreſſed by the *angel* as an intermediate inſtrument: *I am the* LORD [which word ſignifies the ſame as the *eternal* God, who has the ground or reaſon of his *exiſtence* wholly *in himſelf*; and who, in conſequence of his exiſting by an *abſolute neceſſity* of nature, muſt be *independent*, *unchangeable*, and *ſupreme*] *thy God*, i. e. thy *protector* and ſovereign *ruler*. From this phraſe, we may collect the meaning of the word *God* in the holy ſcriptures, and that it is vaſtly *different* from the idea which modern times have affixed to it. In our language, it ſignifies *the one ſelf-exiſtent being of all poſſible perfection*; but in the writings of the Old and New Teſtament, it is a term merely *relative*. Thus we read of *the God of Abraham*, the *God of Iſrael*, the *God of Gods*, and the like. And thus angels and magiſtrates are juſtly ſtiled *Gods*, upon the account

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account of *dominion* communicated from the moſt high; but could never be *ſo* denominated according to our uſe of the word, as denoting an *eternal* and *infinite eſſence*. From whence it follows, that we cannot, upon the principles of revealed religion, argue for the *ſupreme divinity* of *any* perſon, merely as he has the character or appellation of *a God* aſcribed to him; without admitting *angels* (according to the practice of *modern Rome*) and *kings* and *heroes* (after the manner of *Pagan Rome*) into the liſt of our *firſt* and *co-equal* Deities.

I SHALL only add, that this preface, *I am the* LORD *thy God, who have brought thee out of the land of* Egypt, *out of the houſe of bondage* — is thought, by moſt expoſitors, to contain the *general reaſons* of obedience to the divine law; which are, the *ſelf-exiſtence*, *unchangeable majeſty*, and *ſupreme dominion* of the Deity, and his *gracious care* and *providence* over mankind: I ſay, over *mankind*, becauſe tho' the particular circumſtances mentioned in the text, related *only* to the *Jewiſh* nation, yet there are *parallel* inſtances of grace and condeſcenſion,

ſcenſion, tho' not in all reſpects ſo *extraordinary*, expreſſed to the *whole race* of men. But notwithſtanding that I have taken notice of this common interpretation, out of deference to the opinion of many great and learned writers, my own judgment is, that theſe prefatory words were only intended as a *motive* of *obedience* to the *firſt* commandment immediately ſubjoined. For in this view they appear to have their *full force*, and in the ſenſe of the connection ſtand thus---*I am the* LORD [the *ſupreme*, *ſelf-exiſtent*, *independent* God, and] *thy God*; *thou ſhalt*, therefore, *have no other Gods before me*. SERM. XV.

I NOW proceed, having ſaid enough on the introductory parts, to explain the precept itſelf; to ſhew what it is that it *forbids*, and aſſign, diſtinctly, the *reaſons* of the ſeveral branches of the prohibition.

SOME who, I think, carry their notion of the *Moſaic* œconomy as a *political* ſcheme much too far, have imagined this law to be here inſerted for *reaſons* derived from the particular conſtitution of *government* among the *Jews*, and therefore *peculiar* to them

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them alone. This form of government, they ſay, was a *Theocracy*; or, in other words, *God* was their *king*; not as he is the king of *nations*, and ruleth abſolutely and uncontroulably over *all empires* and *public communities*, but as he had taken upon him the *expreſs character*, and diſcharged all the *functions* of their ſupreme *civil* ruler. This, they ſay, appears from his being the *founder* of their *polity*, and the *compiler* of their *laws*. He *reſided* among them with *viſible marks* of *royal majeſty*. He *fought* their battles; *ſubdued* their enemies; in all matters of doubt, where *inferior counſels* were perplexed, might be appealed to for *advice*; and when *ſubordinate courts* or *judges* of equity were embaraſſed in their reſolutions, for a *final deciſion* of controverſies. He *puniſhed* national corruption and degeneracy, and *rewarded* national virtue and obedience; the one with *temporal* diſgrace and calamity, and the other with proſperity and honour: So that they had no other *ſovereign head* of their *political* ſtate, to whom they were obliged abſolutely to ſubmit, and from whom there was no appeal.

appeal. It is therefore ſuppoſed, that the *precept* mentioned in the text is to be conſidered in the ſame light, as if an *edict* or *law* was publiſhed, in other countries, prohibiting *high treaſon* againſt the perſon and ſacred majeſty of the king; and which, by ſetting up an *oppoſite* power, and acknowledging a *foreign* juriſdiction, muſt of conſequence *diſgrace*, and tend to *ſubvert* the eſtabliſhed frame of government. SERM. XV.

HENCE it is, that when the adverſaries of revealed religion exclaim againſt the injuſtice of puniſhing *idolatry* with *death* by the law of *Moſes*, (as it is merely a ſpeculative error, and does not interfere with the ſecurity and order of civil ſocieties) when this difficulty, I ſay, is urged, the advocates for revelation have almoſt univerſally had recourſe to a *theocratical* form of government ſettled in the antient *Jewiſh* nation, for the rational ſolution of it. And they might think themſelves, perhaps, to proceed upon *ſurer* principles, if they had any (not merely a *religious*, but a) *judicial* and *civil* law, forbidding the crime condemned; which, upon the general perſuaſion of a *Theocracy*, would naturally lead

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them to interpret the *firſt commandment*, in the manner that I have above deſcribed.

BUT this interpretation is by no means natural; becauſe there is nothing either in the *precept* itſelf, or in the *reaſon* aſſigned for it, that reſtrains it to this limited and partial meaning. And where rules of practice are not confined by the *terms* in which they are expreſſed, nor by the *reaſon* of the thing, nor by any *concomitant* circumſtances, they ought, according to all rules of right and fair conſtruction, to be taken in the moſt *extenſive* and *univerſal* ſenſe.——We may proceed one ſtep farther, and, I think, ſafely venture to aſſert, that to underſtand this precept, only as a *political* law given to the *Jews*, is contrary to all appearances of probability, and to the foundation on which it is *declared* to ſtand, in the words immediately preceeding---*Thou ſhalt have no other Gods before me*; "becauſe I am "thy *civil* governor, and it would there-"fore be *treaſon* againſt my perſon, and "the dignity and rights of my *political* do-"minion:" This, I ſay, is intirely different in the *general ſcope* of the reaſoning, and with reſpect to *all the ideas* contained in

in it, from --- "*I am the* LORD, the *eter-* SERM.
"*nal ſelf-exiſtent* LORD, and *thy God*;" XV.
Thou ſhalt, therefore, *have no other Gods be-*
fore me. For the latter, which is the true ſtate of the caſe, plainly repreſents it as a rule of *univerſal* equity and obligation, and not as a *national* and *peculiar* law; "it was "plainly intended not barely to deſcribe "the ſupreme Deity as *actually* their God "and king, by virtue of his having aſ-"ſumed a *temporary* rule, to ſerve parti-"cular purpoſes; but as one who had a "*natural* authority, and was inveſted with "the ſovereign command, in conſequence "of his *original independent exiſtence*, and "*immutable* dominion over all *mankind*, "and the whole *rational creation*."

How far the notion of a *Theocracy*, or of God's being the *civil head* of the *Jews*, is diſcoverable from the hiſtory given of that people, and of their conſtitution and laws, I ſhall not now take upon me to determine: and to inquire minutely into it, would be too long a digreſſion. The ſum of the argument, if any are inclined to conſider it thoroughly, may be reduced to theſe two plain queſtions —— Whether

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the true and ſelf-exiſtent God's having ſettled the order of their government, given them a wiſe body of laws, protected and ſaved them from their enemies, and miraculouſly conducted their affairs, "*neceſſarily* conſtitutes any ſuch *particular relation*, and *bond of union*, as is here ſuppoſed?" —— Or whether he may not, notwithſtanding, be juſtly repreſented in this light only, *viz.* "as the *univerſal governor* of mankind, exerciſing a *particular providence* over this ſelected and highly-favoured nation?" That he was their *ruler*, is undeniable; but whether he was ſo in *a way* that *ought* to be, and *muſt* be *diſtinguiſhed* from his ſupreme and unbounded *rule* over *all* (, "in which *particular providences* of every kind, however *majeſtic* and *extraordinary*, and whether they relate to the affairs of *civil ſocieties*, or of *particular perſons*, may be fairly included,") this is the grand queſtion to be decided. For if all theſe things may fall within the idea of God's *univerſal government*, as *parts* of it, which his infinite all-comprehending mind ſaw to be neceſſary for

—— the

the regular and wiſe adminiſtration of the *whole*; and if ſuch parts are *ultimately* deſigned to promote, not an *abſtracted*, but the *general* good, which is too plain to be denied or diſputed; the *proofs* of the *Theocracy* in the antient *Hebrew* nation muſt appear obſcure at leaſt, if not to be in a great meaſure invalidated. SERM. XV.

My deſign, in this argument, was to ſet the firſt *ſacred* and moſt *important* precept of the decalogue in its true light; and to give it its juſt latitude, as an *univerſal law* of true religion and morality. And if I continue the reflexions a little longer, it is only for the ſake of putting things on their right foundation, that revealed religion may be defended not on dark and imaginary, but on clear and ſolid principles. I therefore add, that ſuppoſing the *theocratical* form of government among the *Jews* to be a point inconteſtable, it ſeems ſcarce capable of affording a full and ſatisfactory anſwer to the objection, raiſed againſt the *Hebrew* law, for devoting *idolaters* to *death*. For when the people of *Iſrael*, fond of novelty, and of imitating the cuſtoms of other nations, were ſtubbornly and inflexibly

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reſolved, notwithſtanding all the remonſtrances of the prophet *Samuel* to the contrary, to have a viſible and mortal King; God upon this occaſion declared, that they had *rejected* him, *that* he *ſhould not reign over them.* And as his former *political* reign is founded on a ſuppoſed *compact* between the almighty ſovereign and his people, that *original compact* being now ſolemnly *renounced* on the part of *the people*, "there muſt of courſe be a *diſſolution*, or "*end*, of the *Theocracy*." And yet *idolatry* was ſtill deem'd a *capital* offence, and *puniſhed* as ſuch; and the puniſhment itſelf was, without doubt, deſign'd to be continued, as long as the *moſaic* conſtitution and body of laws continued *authoritative* and in *force*.

1 Sam. viii. 7.

WE muſt therefore, I think, ſeek for ſome *other* principle, by the help of which to explain and reſolve this difficulty. A *political* principle I allow it muſt be, ſince *mere conſcience* and *religious error* are not the proper ſubjects of *civil* laws. And I know of no other that can be ſubſtituted in the room of that which I have now rejected, as too uncertain and weakly ſupported,

ported, but this, "that *idolatry* was pu- SERM.
"niſhed as *high-treaſon* againſt the *ſtate*, XV.
"and not againſt the perſon and majeſty
"of the *king* of the *Jews*." I ſhall endeavour, in a few words, to explain my meaning more diſtinctly. Whatever defeats, ſo far as it prevails, the *ultimate end*, and directly ſubverts the *fundamental principles* of any *particular form* of government, muſt be, in the nature of things (if the end be *good*, and the government *rightly conſtituted*) a *capital* offence. Such kind of *offences*, therefore, differ in their nature, according to the *variety* of the *civil conſtitutions*, received and eſtabliſhed in different nations. What is *treaſon* under a *kingly* government is *not ſo* in a *commonwealth*; that being treaſonable practice *only* in each of theſe particular ſocieties, which undermines the *baſis* on which they ſtand, and interferes with their *eſſential frame*.—As, therefore, the *end* for which the *civil conſtitution* of the *Jews* was formed, *viz.* to prevent their being overrun with *idolatry* (which, as it prevailed among the neighbouring nations, *corrupted* their internal ſenſe of the difference of

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good and evil, and baniſhed *humanity* and *decency*, and many the moſt conſiderable and important of the *ſocial virtues*; by introducing ſhameful *impurities*, and *human ſacrifices* quite deteſtable to nature) as the *end*, I ſay, for which the *civil conſtitution* of the *Jews* was form'd, appears when thus explain'd, and abſtracted from all conſiderations *merely religious*, to be moſt *wiſe* and *gracious* in itſelf; and as the *judicial laws*, in that ſcheme of government, were admirably adapted to *ſubſerve* and *advance* this wiſe and gracious end; it neceſſarily follows, that *idolatry*, which would have *fruſtrated* the whole deſign of the conſtitution, and have entirely *diſſolved* and *deſtroyed* it, muſt upon the *ſame* reaſons, that are allowed to be *juſt* in all other *polity*, have deſerved *capital* puniſhment. And this, I think, will effectually vindicate its being treated with ſuch ſeverity in the *Jewiſh* ſtate; but not excuſe the like rigour exerciſed againſt it in *any other*, where it is merely an error of *ſpeculation*; and the offender, by not diſturbing the *external peace* of ſociety, renders himſelf *accountable* to God alone.

I now

I now proceed, having obviated a miſtake which would repreſent the firſt command- SERM. XV.
ment, in the manner in which it was deliver'd to the *Jews*, as a *political*, and not in the light of a *moral*, law (the *reaſons* of which, as propoſed by their own lawgiver, extend to *all nations*) to ſpecify, particularly, what are the crimes which it directly forbids: And under this head I ſhall have no need to enlarge much, becauſe that the things enumerated are really forbidden, and the reaſons of the prohibition likewiſe, will be eaſily perceived. And,

IN the FIRST place, it is moſt certainly forbidden by this eternal law of reaſon and natural religion, ſolemnly declared to the *Iſraelites* from mount *Sinai*, to acknowledge any other *ſupreme* and ſelf *exiſtent* God beſides *Jehovah*; ſo as to *confront* his authority, and ſet up a *competitor*, or *rival* Deity, to *conteſt* with him the ſovereignty over the univerſe.

THE ground of this prohibition is—*I am the LORD*—who have the *reaſon* of my exiſtence wholly within myſelf, and am

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am indebted for it to no *external* or *ſuperior* principle. It ſhould ſeem therefore, as the *ſelf-exiſtence* of the Deity is the chief foundation of the firſt commandment, that his *unity* might be neceſſarily inferred from the *idea* of *ſelf-exiſtence*: And accordingly this has been attempted by a great and moſt celebrated writer *. But as the argument is too *abſtruſe* for common apprehenſions, however *weighty* and *concluſive* in itſelf, I ſhall endeavour to eſtabliſh this fundamental principle of all religion, in a clearer and more intelligible method. — I only beg leave to premiſe, that the point now to be proved is not, "*that there is* one *God*," which in truth is proving no more, "than "*that there is* a *God*;" but another very different propoſition, *viz.* "*that there is* "but *one*, or *that there is* no more *than* "*one*;" for which, as it is a *negative* propoſition, it is not reaſonable to expect *demonſtration*. Of the *exiſtence* of *one* God we are *certain*; and it lies entirely upon thoſe, who are not ſatisfied with this, to

* Dr. *S. Clark*, in his demonſtration of the being and attributes of God.

offer

offer ſome *direct* and *poſitive* arguments to convince us that *there is*, and *muſt be*, a *plurality* of Gods. If, in the preſent caſe, *we* are not able to *demonſtrate*, there may be no want of the *greateſt* evidence that the *nature* of the thing will admit of; but only an *impoſſibility* of our attaining to *a particular kind* of evidence, which is not at all *neceſſary*. For there may be heights of *probability*, or degrees of what is called *moral certainty*, *equally perſwaſive*, ſo as to remove all rational ground of *doubt*, and juſtly of *equal influence* in regulating the ſchemes and conduct of human life, as the *ſtricteſt demonſtrations* of truth. And this, I apprehend, will fully appear from the particular inſtance now before us, when the following things are briefly ſtated and conſidered. SERM. XV.

FIRST, that *one* cauſe, *equal* to the production and maintenance of the preſent frame of things, is *as much*, in general, as is *neceſſary* to be ſuppoſed, and therefore *as much* as *ought* to be ſuppoſed: So that it is perverſeneſs, and a ridiculous *exceſs* of *ſcepticiſm*, to *perplex* itſelf, and be *impertinently*

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tinently curious about any thing *beyond* this.

SECONDLY, as there are *evidences* of *one* Deity, which unconteſtably prove his exiſtence, we may reaſonably infer from hence, that if there was *another*, there would be convincing *proofs* of his *being* likewiſe; if *more* than *two*, further *evidence* of this additional *plurality*. We might juſtly expect, as the knowledge of *all* would be *equally* uſeful with the knowledge of *any ſingle one*, "that there ſhould "be expreſs and undeniable *traces* of a "*multiplicity* of Gods, if ſuch there ac-"tually *were*; and ſuch too as would point "out the *preciſe number* of theſe firſt ef-"ficient Deities — *as clearly*, as the exi-"ſtence of a God is *in general* demon-"ſtrated."— Otherwiſe, the world could ſcarce be ſuppoſed to be the production of *wiſe* artificers; becauſe it muſt be groſsly defective in one grand *deſign* of wiſdom, the directing reaſonable creatures to the *origin* of things, to the *true cauſes* and *authors* of their being.—But nothing *like this* appears in the *whole viſible* conſtitution of

nature; and therefore the *mere ſuppoſition* of a *plurality* of Gods muſt be quite *wild* and *extravagant*. But further, SERM. XV.

THIRDLY, if there be *more* firſt cauſes than *one*, they are either *equal* in perfections of nature, or *unequal*. If *unequal*, there muſt be ſome *ſuperior* in wiſdom and power to *the reſt*; which would ſuperſede the *neceſſity* and all the *uſes* of *their* exiſtence. Or if, notwithſtanding, they are *all* allowed to have *acted*, there muſt be a *viſible diſparity*, with reſpect to juſtneſs of *deſign* and curioſity and ſkill of *workmanſhip*, in the ſeveral parts of the wonderful fabrick of the univerſe. But of this there is not the leaſt diſcovery; the *whole* being compleatly *exquiſite*, and *marvellous* both in its contrivance and compoſition. And, on the other hand, if the firſt effecting cauſes be imagined to be *abſolutely equal*, the ſcheme of *polytheiſm* will be altogether as abſurd and irrational; "becauſe the ſuppoſition of *one* "Deity is fully ſufficient to account for "*all* the appearances of *nature*, and the "*whole* adminiſtration of *providence*."

FOR

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FOR *one* being neceſſarily exiſting, of immutable excellence, and poſſeſſed of infinite wiſdom, power, and goodneſs (which is the univerſal idea of the ſupreme Deity) is as capable of making the *preſent* and all *poſſible* worlds, and of governing the world to the utmoſt perfection of *natural* or *moral* government, as *two*, *three*, or *a thouſand* ſuch beings can be ſuppoſed to be. *Infinite* wiſdom and power, which are ſuppoſed to reſide in the *one* creator and monarch of the univerſe, cannot be *increaſed*; nor, conſequently, can the *effects* of them be rendered in the *leaſt* degree more compleat and admirable: And this demonſtrates to us, beyond all contradiction, that "there can be *no poſſible ground* on "which to imagine, that there is *more* "than one;" And whatever there is *no ground* in *reaſon* to ſuppoſe, nor any *medium* in *nature* to prove (if it ought not to be ranked among things *abſolutely impoſſible*) it muſt however be *madneſs* to *aſſert*. For how can any man contend for, or even introduce that as a point of *con-*

controverſy, " which he neither *has*, nor " *can have*, any foundation for eſpouſing, nor the leaſt *plauſible colour* of " reaſon to ſupport?"— *All nature* is *againſt* him, as well as the *abſtract reaſon* of the thing itſelf; becauſe there is nothing to be ſeen, in the external world, but *unity* of *deſign* and *harmony* of *operation*. So that this precept of the decalogue, *thou ſhalt have no other* ſupreme and ſelf-exiſtent *Gods before me*, muſt of neceſſity reſt upon a ſteady and immutable baſis; " becauſe all the appearances " of nature are *for* it, and there is no " *poſſibility* of forming a rational objection *againſt* it." SERM. XV.

SUFFER me, however, before I diſmiſs this topic, to make a ſhort remark or two upon the *Manichean* opinion,——that there are two *infinite*, *eternal*, *independent* principles, the one abſolutely *good*, the other a *malicious* and *evil* principle; who are the diſtinct and oppoſite Authors of the good and evil that appear in the univerſe. — As to this I would obſerve, in the *firſt* place, that it may be rightly eſtimated as a ſcheme

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a ſcheme of *Atheiſm*; becauſe if there be not a *ſingle invariable* plan and order maintained, in the diſpoſition and government eſpecially of the *moral* world, it muſt amount to the ſame upon the whole, in its religious and practical conſequences, as the *utter non-exiſtence* of Deity.——*Secondly*, that if the origin of evil can be reaſonably and clearly accounted for, upon admitting but *one firſt* principle of being ſupremely *good*, the *Manichee* can have no poſſible foundation, in the nature of things, for ſetting up his *evil* Deity; becauſe, upon this ſtate of the caſe, it is altogether unneceſſary, and of courſe a meer *romantic* and *arbitrary* fancy.---- And, *thirdly*, that the conſequence of admitting two *repugnant* principles, *equal* in ſkill and operation, muſt be this unavoidably, that *no ſingle exiſtence*, that *neither good* nor *evil*, could be produced but by *mutual conſent*, becauſe the force *oppoſing* every ſuch effect would be always adequate to the *producing* power; and muſt therefore of neceſſity *fruſtrate* the event. And

And *no* agreement could doubtleſs be framed between beings of ſuch *contrary* diſpoſitions, and ſo irreconcileably *averſe* to each other, but upon this ſingle preliminary ground, that the *proportions* of good and evil, throughout the whole univerſe, ſhould be for ever and exactly *equal.* But there is *no mark* of ſuch an abſolute equality, ſo far as the world is ſubject to our obſervation; on the contrary, every where, either the *good* or the *evil* viſibly *preponderates.*——I ſhall only add, 'that *equal mixtures* and *degrees* of 'good and evil are, upon the whole, 'neither good *nor* evil; and therefore it 'is ſcarce conceivable how, upon *this* baſis '(which is yet the only one) *two* beings 'ſtrongly concerned for the ſuperior prevalency of *one* of theſe above the *other* 'ſhould ever *agree.*' We have the utmoſt reaſon therefore, notwithſtanding all the objections that have hitherto appeared, to acquieſce, without any heſitation, in this important article of the *Jewiſh*, the *Chriſtian*, and indeed of *natural* religion, that *the* LORD *our God is one Lord.* But,

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SECONDLY, the text forbids not only our acknowledging the exiſtence of a *nature co-ordinate* to that of the ſelf-exiſtent *Jehovah*, the only original cauſe and abſolute ruler of the univerſe; but alſo the allowing the character of an *inferior* God to any being, without an expreſs *warrant* and *authority* from him. An *inferior God*, however differing from our preſent forms of ſpeech, is *ſcripture* language; and this expreſſion muſt be introduced, when we are explaining not modern creeds, but ſcripture principles. *Angels* are ſtiled *Gods* in the old teſtament, and therefore, I preſume, *juſtly* ſo denominated; and yet we muſt all admit, that they were only *ſubordinate* Gods. But as the ſupreme Deity alone knows to what created *ſpirit* that title properly belongs; and as we cannot be certain that any *inferior* or *mediatory* Deity, will, in his interceſſion for us, be acceptable to him, without a particular and determinate revelation; every ſuch mediatorial Deity muſt of conſequence be an idol, a creature of *fancy* and *ſuperſtition*, that has *no exiſtence* in the *eſtabliſhed ſcheme* and *conſtitution*

ſtitution of the moral world, if he be not ſo denominated and directly characteris'd by the *God of Gods.* SERM. XV.

BUT it will perhaps be asked, if other beings, beſides the eternal and immutable Deity, may be juſtly diſtinguiſhed by the appellation of *Gods*, how it can be conſiſtently made a principle of revealed religion that there is but *one God?* To which I anſwer, "that the phraſes *the* "*one*, or *the only*, God have exactly the "ſame preciſe meaning in ſcripture, as "the *chief*, or *ſupreme*, God." This may be illuſtrated, beyond all reaſonable exception, by other parallel paſſages. For as when it is ſaid, that *God only is holy*, tho' *Angels* alſo are denominated *holy*, the ſenſe muſt be, that *he alone* is *abſolutely*, and *unchangeably* holy; as it is affirmed, that God is the *only potentate*, becauſe he is the *original*, *independent*, and *ſupreme* potentate; that he is the *only Saviour*, tho' that title is attributed to *others* likewiſe, becauſe they are but *ſubordinate* Saviours; and that *there is none good but* ONE, *that is God*, tho' we read both of *good men*, and *good ſpirits*, of an higher

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order: In exactly the ſame way and idiom of ſpeech is he declared to be the *only God*, becauſe *he alone* is the *moſt high* and *neceſſarily exiſtent* God, and *all others* are *ſubject* to him, and *depend* upon him, both for their *being* and *authority*.

IN the LAST place, the command in the text forbids our aſcribing *ſupreme* divine honours to any but the one true God of the Univerſe, or *inferior* religious honours to a *mediatory* being, without his *expreſs* direction and command. And this alſo is evident from the *reaſon* of the thing. For as with reſpect to *inviſible ſpirits*, we can never be certain, where we have no extraordinary revelation to direct us, either that they are *acquainted* with our *petitions*; or that their *interceſſion* will be *available*; or that God will *approve* of our *imploring* it; all ſuch *pretended* offices of devotion (which are multiplied to an extravagant degree in the *Romiſh* church) muſt be *abſurd* and *ſuperſtitious*. But to pay *theſe honours* to a mediator, whom the ſovereign deity hath *appointed* to receive them, cannot be in the leaſt *irrational*; becauſe they ultimately

mately terminate in the acknowledgment of his own *ſupremacy*. And this can be no *diminution* of that praiſe and glory which eſſentially belong to him *alone*; becauſe it would be *blaſphemy* and *inſult* to the majeſty of heaven and earth, to offer *him* the homage that is due to a *mediator* commiſſioned and authoriſed by himſelf, or indeed *any* homage, but what is fit to be received by the mediator's *God*, and the *independent* lord of the whole creation.

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On the SEVENTH COMMANDMENT.

Exodus xx. 14.

Thou ſhalt not commit Adultery.

NEXT to the definitive ſentence and expreſs command of God, iſſued forth with terrible pomp and circumſtances of majeſty, againſt *murder*, moſt naturally and aptly follows the ſevere prohibition of another crime, which, with reſpect to its own intrinſick malignity, approaches the neareſt to it; as an outrage committed againſt *ſociety*, a diſſolution of the *tendereſt* and moſt *endear-*

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ing ties, and a violation of *common right*; which, in its conſequences, may prove equally *fatal*; and is, ſometimes, much more *ſtrongly* and *deeply reſented* by the injured perſon himſelf, and *an incurable wound* given to his *peace* of mind, as well as to the honour of families.

IT were indeed greatly to be wiſhed, that there was no occaſion for ever mentioning ſuch moſt degenerate crimes, as thoſe of *murder* and *adultery*, which are utterly unbecoming that ſtrict profeſſion of inward *goodneſs*, and untainted *purity* of thought and affection, which we make as *Chriſtians*; and fix indelible characters of reproach and ſhame upon us, conſider'd merely as *men*. And it is ſomewhat aſtoniſhing, and out of the plain preſcribed courſe and order of *rational* nature, it is a reflection calculated to inſpire both grief and horror; "that there are *words* in *all* "languages to *expreſs* ſuch vile enormi-"ties." If this was not the caſe, and they were in *practice* unknown, it might perhaps be expedient to give no *intimation* concerning them; and there might be danger, in pointing out to the evil-minded

minded and licentiously-disposed, in what *new* instances of excess and dissolute living they might corrupt themselves, and gratify insatiate passion. But alas! the scene of guilt is too notorious and widely extended, to admit of our ever deliberating on such *reserved* and *cautious* measures as these. There is no possibility, by our silence, to *veil* many scandalous and fatal perversions of human nature, which a wise and good man would chuse, if it depended on him, should lie buried in eternal darkness. "For men descending "from their *rank* in the creation, dis- "gracing their *reason*, giving up the "reins to *appetite*, and allowing them- "selves an unbounded scope in *sensuality*, "make their disorders and impurities "publickly *known*; while *honour*, *vir-* "*tue*, and *piety* mourn, and look on "with concern; and *ingenuous modesty* "blushes, thro' its confusion." And even in nations professing *Christianity*, the most spiritual and sublime institution of religion that ever the world was acquainted with, the vice, of which I am now more particularly treating, does not

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ſeem to be *leſs*, I rather fear it is *much more*, frequent than in many *Heathen* countries; in this reſpect at leaſt, unjuſtly ſtiled *barbarous*, or their accuſers *polite*; who too often abuſe their greater *light*, and pretended *improvements* in knowledge, to undermine the moſt important truths, and confound all *moral* differences.

AND, now, when ſuch an extreme corruption in the moral conduct of mankind appears, not as ſomething before unheard of, and in a manner *monſtrous*, in one ſingle example, but in various inſtances; which render the general idea and ſpeculation of this vice more *familiar*, and leſs *horrible*, and naturally lead us to apprehend, that the contagion may ſpread, and become more general: In this caſe, our ſilence will be highly criminal. It is deſerting our poſt as the friends and loyal ſubjects of *God*, confederates with *nature*, and profeſſed advocates for the cauſe of *virtue*; and tamely ſubmitting to the *incroachments* of the univerſal enemy. And I will take the liberty to add, that one reaſon, why *adultery*,

tery, and *murder* too, have been ſo frequent among us, may poſſibly be (ſhould I ſay probably is, there would be no preſumption in it) that they have been ſo ſeldom made the *ſubjects* of *particular* diſcourſes.—Vices, leſs common, ſhould not, without doubt, be a *general* topick of diſcourſe; but they ought, moſt certainly, to be ſometimes introduced; and that not only curſorily (which, we find by experience, has ſeldom a good effect) but as *diſtinct* arguments of themſelves. For who knows how many things may be ſuggeſted ſuited to a particular caſe, how many things framed, and as it were adapted on purpoſe, to ſtrike the mind of the hearer, which never occurred to his own thoughts? Who knows not, that the bulk of mankind conceive and judge, abhor and approve, reject and chooſe, upon *general* ideas, and inſtincts of nature, without being able to aſſign particularly ſeveral very weighty reaſons, which, if known, might ſtrongly influence their conduct? I beg leave therefore to extend the remark, and declare my opinion more generally, that one prin-

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cipal reaſon why preaching is ſo unſucceſsful in convincing and reforming ſinners (which was our bleſſed Saviour's chief aim, and, as he himſelf ſays, the ultimate deſign of his miſſion; who *came not to call the righteous, but ſinners, to repentance)* one chief reaſon of this is, that our diſcourſes are moſt commonly directed, not to *particular* offenders, but to *all* the vicious *indiſcriminately*. So that the *adulterer* finds nothing in them that touches *his own* condition more than it does that of the *ſlanderer*, a criminal of quite another denomination and character; and therefore applies the *whole* to *thoſe*, whom, by an arbitrary inward ſentence, he has pronounced to be guilty, and not to *himſelf*, whom he has been long labouring to excuſe, and repreſent as innocent.—I ſhall now proceed to offer, briefly, ſome arguments, which will demonſtrate the *peculiar* iniquity and villainy of the crime forbidden in the text; after which, I ſhall conſider what muſt be included within the juſt and natural *ſcope* of it, either by *likeneſs* and *correſpondency* of reaſoning, or by juſt and undeniable

deniable *inference.* Mankind are gene- SERM. rally agreed in aſſigning to the *adulterer* XVI. a large ſhare of guilt; in expreſſing that reſentment againſt him, and loading him with that diſgrace and infamy, which belong to the moſt corrupt and profligate characters: Upon which account, I need not enter ſo minutely into this part of the argument, as if my preſent buſineſs was to convince the *underſtanding*; but only to ſuggeſt ſuch hints, as will be ſufficient to keep alive and improve an inward horror *already* excited, to revive *reflexion*, which bad habits may have, in a great meaſure, ſuppreſſed, and fortify the *reſolution* of the innocent.

To begin with the malignity of the crime itſelf, which is expreſsly prohibited in the text, and by the whole tenour of revelation; "which was a *capital* offence "under the *moſaic* œconomy; and has "been adjudged worthy of *death*, by the "laws of many other nations."

It is, in the FIRST place, a violation of the moſt ſacred and important *bond* in all ſociety; upon which the happineſs of mankind, their moſt *refined* and *elegant* plea-

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pleaſures, and their ſureſt *relief* from care and anxiety (all confined within the bounds of *innocence* and *ſtrict honour*) more immediately and neceſſarily depend, than on any other *publick* and *ſocial* obligation — without which, the *rational* and *moral* human ſpecies could be retained within no rules of *order* becoming their *nature*, no *decency*; but muſt range *wild* and uncontroul'd like inferior creatures, whom they were born, not to imitate in *unregulated inſtinct*, but, to *excell* and *command* — without which, a variable, unſtable, roving appetite would ſoon gain the *tranſcendency* above reaſon, and introduce *confuſion* every where — and which was, therefore, rendered *holy* and *honourable* by a *particular* ſanction of the univerſal creator, who foreſaw all the *probabilities* of things; as it had been, *originally*, declared *inviolable* in the conſtitution of nature itſelf; and has been proclaimed ſince, and tranſmitted down from age to age, as an *immutable* law, by the conſtant and wonderful *equality* maintained in the number of the different *ſexes*, allowing only for probable *decreaſes*,

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to which one of them is particularly *subject*, in the courſe of human affairs. SERM. XVI.

AGAIN, the ſame crime that thus oppoſes the *firſt dictate* of nature, defies the *firſt inſtitution* of almighty God, and the eſtabliſhed rules of all wiſe ſocieties, is alſo an injury to our neighbour in *thoſe rights*, of which he is moſt *jealous*, and in one of the moſt *valuable* branches of his property; frequently more dear to him, and more tenderly cheriſh'd, than *eaſe*, *plenty*, *honour*, and even *life itſelf*. "The *adulterer*, therefore, may be the "inſtrument of much more *exquiſite* and "*laſting* miſery to the perſon whom he "injures, than it is poſſible, in many "inſtances, even for the *murderer* to oc-"caſion." Where the affection on the ſide of the party injured, has been ſincere and ardent, he infixes *a wound* that preys upon the *inward conſtitution* of the mind, and renders it *habitually* dejected and inconſolable, by alienating the love and tenderneſs of the *violated* object from the perſon that *deſerves*, and has the *only claim* to it, and places the chief part of his preſent and temporary felicity in it; who not only

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ſmarts, and is deeply afflicted, thro' a ſenſe of his own ſufferings, but for the *proſtitution* and *infamy* of perverted innocence, the *ſoftener* of all his inquietudes. So that the vice, which I am now arguing againſt, diſclaims, and utterly renounces, *all humanity* as well as *juſtice*; it cares not with what keen and inexpreſſible anxieties it *racks* the *heart* of one who never *offended* him; and therefore muſt be ranked amongſt the moſt deteſtable exceſſes of inordinate deſire, and worſe than *brutiſh* intemperance.

BUT the hurt of *adultery*, tho' exceedingly great in the view already given of it, is not to be circumſcribed and confined within ſuch *narrow* bounds as theſe. For it renders the *legitimacy* of children *ſuſpected*, and hinders their regular and juſt *education*; it ſows the ſeeds of implacable animoſity and diſſention between *families*; and ſcarce from any crime have reſulted more direful and tragical effects, to *ſocieties in general*, as well as to *individuals*.

AND now, upon the whole, we may juſtly conclude, that a ſin of ſuch uncommon

common turpitude, where the *iniquity*, the *treachery*, the *violence* are mark'd out in ſuch *glaring* colours, and the *pernicious effects* of which are ſo *eaſy* to be diſcerned, can hardly be unknown to any man, who has the internal faculties of *a man*, and makes the leaſt uſe of *his reaſon*. *Ignorance*, therefore, can no more *excuſe* it than it can *murder*, *oppreſſion*, *rapine*, or any other the moſt foul and attrocious crimes; nor can *art varniſh over* and *diſguiſe* its deformity. And from hence it follows, that every *reſolved* offender of this kind muſt be *preſumptuouſly wicked*, and the *complexion* of his mind thoroughly *depraved*. His *concern* for the *univerſal rights* of mankind is quite abſorb'd, and ſwallow'd up, by his *ſelf-complacency*, and immoderate purſuit of *private gratification*; his *ſocial affections* are wantonly ſacrificed to *animal deſire*: And therefore, if he ſtill retains any idea of *religion*, any conviction (tho' derived from the light of nature only) of a *ſupreme authority* and *moral rule* over the creation, he may be equally ſure, that his irregular diſpoſitions and diſorderly SERM. XVI.

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conduct are highly *diſpleaſing* to God, as that *God himſelf exiſts*; and that, *perſiſting* in his tranſgreſſion, he muſt be condemned with *ignominy*, and doomed to undergo ſome *terrible* and *exemplary* puniſhment, as infallibly, as there is ground to expect *a future judgment* of mankind. To *ſpare* ſuch a criminal as this would be directly *thwarting* juſtice, and *encouraging* the triumphs of vice.—Which is a conſideration of ſuch vaſt moment, that, if it was effectually impreſſed upon the mind, it would either *wholly* reſtrain us from the practice of ſo palpable an immorality; or put us immediately upon collecting our utmoſt ſtrength, to *break* the *guilty ſnare* into which we are unhappily fallen; leaſt, otherwiſe, we find ourſelves more and more, and in the end *inextricably*, intangled by it, to the everlaſting *ruin* of all our proſpects and hopes of happineſs.—

To all which let me add, that the ſame righteous ſentence which reaſon, the firſt, the eternal, law of God to man, pronounces againſt *adultery*, *Chriſtianity* expreſsly confirms. By its fixed and unalterable

alterable conſtitution, it devotes the of- SERM.
fender to the miſeries of the life to come, XVI.
and to *eternal death.* Thus we are aſ-
ſured, that — *Whoremongers and Adulte-*
rers God will judge; and that *the* Hebr. xiii.
works of the fleſh are manifeſt, which 4.
are adultery, &c. —— *which they that*
do ſhall not inherit the kingdom of God. Gal. v. 19,
21.
So that for a *Chriſtian* to be an *adulterer* muſt be, upon his own principles, (even tho' he has learned from the *weak*, the *intereſted*, or the *ſenſual prophane*, to vilify the inflexible dictates and decrees of nature) it muſt be, I ſay, upon his own principles, as irrecoverably to miſs of ſalvation, as if he was a *robber*, or a *murderer*: And if *he* has any juſt ground to hope for the eternal favour of God, according to the ſtated terms of the Goſpel, *no ſinner* can poſſibly be excluded from it. How ſuch perſons therefore, with all their *prejudices*, can be free from continual *terror*, and bear up under their unavoidable reflections and conſciouſneſs of *guilt*, is extremely ſurprizing; and plainly demonſtrates to us, what utter *ſtupidity*, and *inattention* even to its own true in-

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tereſt, *vice* is capable of introducing and eſtabliſhing in the mind.—Every one who has conſidered the nature of *this* ſubject, will ſoon perceive that I have been cramped and limited in my *reaſonings* upon it; and that the arguments propoſed might have been more *minutely* urged, and others *produced*, if this *extreme* in the conduct of mankind did not require to be treated with peculiar *delicacy*. I know, that, in what I have already offered, I have been unexceptionably decent; and ſo much as this was abſolutely neceſſary to be ſaid, to prevent *young* perſons, eſpecially, from being hurried on, by a blind impetuous appetite, to ſo ſcandalous a pitch of injuſtice and impurity. And I only hope for *their own* ſakes, being myſelf entirely *diſintereſted*, that it will have ſuch an effect upon the conduct of their *future* life, as the *importance* of the argument deſerves.

IT is neceſſary for me to obſerve farther, that our bleſſed Saviour has extended the precept of the text *beyond* the commiſſion of *actual* adultery; and that upon moſt clear and unexceptionable principles

of *reaſon.* For an *adulterous habit* of mind, an *inclination* cheriſhed, an *intention* deliberately form'd, to commit this crime, can, in a *moral* eſtimate, fall but little, if any thing at all ſhort, of the real *perpetration* of it. In all immoralities whatſoever, the principal *guilt* does not lie in the *act* itſelf, but in the *temper* and *diſpoſition* of the mind. "The *fact* "may poſſibly be innocent, where *the* "*reſolving upon it* never can." If a man had *determined* within himſelf to *ſteal*, but was diſappointed by ſome unforeſeen *accident*, his *deſigns* of injuſtice ſtill ſubſiſting; 'tis impoſſible for him, in *reaſon* and *equity*, to acquit himſelf of the *guilt* of theft. And in the preſent caſe, the rational and juſt determination is, and muſt be, the *ſame*. Nay, *a ſcheme* of adultery *cooly weighed* and *approved of*, tho' not *executed*, may be more criminal, and argue a more inveterate and dangerous ſtate of *depravity*, with reſpect to the wicked *projector*, than the *offence* itſelf (abſolutely inexcuſable as it is in *all* circumſtances) when not *premeditated*, but occaſioned by ſudden and unexpected

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temptations. Which ſhews us undeniably the eminent *wiſdom*, and the vaſt *importance*, of this part of *Chriſt*'s doctrine, eſpecially when it is applied to all *parallel* caſes; that *whoſoever looketh on a woman, to luſt after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.*

Mat. v. 28.

THIS rule of *chaſtity* is grounded upon the general reaſon, "that where *any offences* are forbidden, the *immediate* "*cauſes*, from whence ſuch offences "ſpring, muſt alſo be by *implication* for-"bidden."—I ſhall therefore briefly mention ſome other *irregularities*, from which the particular crime, now under conſideration, may be ſuppoſed to take *its riſe*, or by which at leaſt it is *countenanced* and *encouraged*, as what are evidently *comprehended* within the due *extent* and *latitude* of the ſeventh commandment.

THE *firſt* is, that in our *publick entertainments*, *ſcenes* of *adultery* are ſo often exhibited, without any *appearance* of their giving *offence*. The adulterer, tho' in all reſpects of abandoned principles and licentious morals, is frequently a character of greateſt *diſtinction*; and the perſon, moſt

moſt grievouſly *injured*, painted as an ob- SERM.
ject of *contempt* and *ridicule*. The vile XVI.
offender, who is not fit to be *tolerated* in
any *human* ſociety, triumphs and is ap-
plauded; and the innocent is expoſed to
ſcorn and *inſult*. And what can this tend
to, "unleſs it be to *extirpate* our ſenſe of
"good and evil, to *authoriſe* ungovern'd
"lawleſs luſt, and deſtroy *humanity?*"
I will not pretend to ſay, that *fictitious
ſcenes can*, under *no* regulation, be of ſer-
vice to mankind, by being converted into
inſtructive and moving lectures of *ſocial
virtue*; but this I will aſſert, that while
they are *thus* offenſive to *modeſty*, and
take off from the *horror* of the moſt
ſhocking vices, they ought, for the *pub-
lick good*, to be *abſolutely* ſuppreſt; that
no friend to *virtue* ought to encourage
ſuch ſcandalous repreſentations, which
have a moſt manifeſt tendency to taint
and viciate the *morals* of the age; "and
"that while *adultery*, in particular, is
"allowed to be *exhibited* without *cenſure*,
"it is no wonder, if it be *practiſed* with-
"out *remorſe*."—That *deſtructive glare*
of *wit*, that aims at deſcribing ſo mon-

SERM. XVI. strous a vice in a *pleasing form*, or, indeed, in any other form than is *directly* adapted to excite *aversion* and *detestation*, "ought always to be *received* and *treated* with those *marks* of *resentment*, "which are *due* to what is naturally *a* "*foe* to the honour and happiness of "mankind."

AGAIN, as another *source* of this immorality, so offensive to God and prejudicial to mankind, every thing that has a *natural tendency* to *inflame* the passions, ought to be carefully avoided; and all *luxury*, which *dissipates* sober thought, *relaxes* the force of virtuous resolution, and, of consequence, prepares the way for the most extravagant and unbridled *sensuality*. "—When men take a pleasure in being "*emasculate*, in *disguising* the *human animal* form by odd singularities of dress, "and by an uninterruption of impertinence, and inconsiderate follies, *defacing* entirely the *human rational*; "what should restrain them, destitute as "they are of *reflexion* and *manly* virtue, "from *any* gratifications of irregular desire? The *gross pleasures* of the *epi-*

" *cure*, whoſe ultimate delight is termi- SERM.
" nated in *ſenſe*, and who ſeems entirely XVI.
" to have forgotten of *what temper* his
" *mind* is formed, will naturally lead to
" the *violence* of the *adulterer*." And he, to whom grave and ſerious thinking is ſuch an intolerable *fatigue*, that he cannot compoſe himſelf to *decency* even in the publick worſhip of God, and when points of *morality* are enquired into, the conſcientious obſervance of which muſt finally decide *the fate of human nature*, either for happineſs or miſery; what *proficiency* in *virtue* can be expected from him? what *progreſſive ſtages* of *intemperance*, upon too ſolid a ground of probability, may not be feared!—Eſpecially if he gives himſelf a *deſpicable* and *inſipid* air of gaiety, when ſuch an important ſubject as *the preſent* is diſcuſſed, he can ſcarce be ſuppoſed to have remaining within him any *moral reſtraint*, but muſt be addicted wholly to *vanity*.

F I N I S.

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